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THE STAIN ON PAGE 61

(A DETECTIVE STORY)

BY

CHARLES·T·JORDAN·

COMING, IN NO. 40, "A MASKED MYSTERY."

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THE STAIN ON PAGE 61

A DETECTIVE STORY

By CHARLES T. JORDAN

CHAPTER ONE

DEANWOOD PARK

HAD any one hazarded the guess that, within a few hours, the Park would be agog over an inexplicable tragedy, he would have been branded as an idiot. Yet, could the near future have been foreseen, and could George Sumner have remained with the others, instead of having been sent on a last-minute errand, undoubtedly the following day would have dawned peacefully on Deanwood Park's care-free contingent of summer vacationists. As is usually the case, the deplorable event was ushered in by a series of what appeared to be, on the surface, the most insignificant occurrences.

Thus does Fate provide her striking contrasts.

If a bit boisterous, it was, in all, a good-natured, congenial crowd in bathing that blistering Saturday afternoon in July. The cool water of the Russian River—dammed a quarter of a mile below—was magnificent.

They were nine—this particular group that cavorted in the water just off a sunny, sanded nook near the lower end of the camping-ground. Diminutive Wilton Dennison and his sister Gladys, plump and brown as an Indian pudding; the tall Hollister girls, Florence and Beatrice; Grace and Charlie Knapp—the latter still in his teens; short, raw-boned Dave Winslow; Clark Hanson, sleek and dark, and the powerful-bodied George Sumner—completed the roll. Mrs. Dennison sat on the hot sand, a light pongee parasol with a carved handle over her shoulders, reading.

Clark Hanson's dark head disappeared amid a hundred

air-bubbles, and a second later came suddenly into sight. "Look out for the wet!" he cried gleefully, as he audaciously ducked Gladys Dennison.

"I—blub—think that's just too mean of you, Mr. Hanson," she spluttered, shaking the water out of her eyes. "You had your nerve with you." One could surmise from the manner in which she spoke that Hanson did not find a great deal of favor in her eyes.

"I always was nervy," he laughed unabashed, and turning suddenly repeated the trick with Florence, the younger of the brown-haired Hollister girls.

Florence took it all in good part—though tall and mature-looking, she was only a youngster—and when Clark wasn't looking she retaliated in kind.

"I suppose all you good people are going to take in the dance to-night?" spoke Dave Winslow, as his head emerged from a brief under-water swim.

"Yes! Sure thing!" most of them chorused confusedly.

"Clark and I aren't coming," announced Gladys' brother, after the hubbub had subsided. "So you don't want to count on us."

"Oh, why not, Wilton?" pleaded Grace Knapp who, of medium height, was athletically built. "Don't say you won't. Come; please do." Her violet eyes eloquently endorsed her plea.

"Yes; why not?" entreated two or three others, clinging to his wet, tanned shoulders. "Be a sport, Wilt. What if you aren't a ballroom expert? Few of us are."

"Break away! Break away!" cried young Dennison playfully, at the same time reaching down and spooning two monstrous armfuls of water over their heads.

"Wilton, you are horrid!" chided his sister. "Going to play cards again, I suppose?"

"You guessed it."

"I wish you would get over that habit—for that's all it is. It's a waste of time and——"

"And money," chipped in Sumner significantly. Then he sneezed.

"My money is my own," retorted Wilton somewhat testily. "And if anything's a waste of time it's dancing."

"But you can do lots of better things with your money," urged Gladys. "I should think Mr. Hanson would be ashamed to play with you any more—you play so poorly. You always lose."

"No, he doesn't, Miss Dennison," spoke up Clark Hanson, who gambled inveterately. "Why, he beat me all hollow last time; didn't you, Wilton?"

Young Dennison willingly corroborated him.

"Don't you folks think you'd better get dried-out and dressed soon?" called Mrs. Dennison from her hollowed-out spot in the burning sand. She was a widow and a little hard of hearing. "It will take some time to decorate the pavilion, and it's past four o'clock now."

"All right, mother dear," responded Gladys; and after a farewell plunge the little group ran for cozy spots on the sand.

It would be difficult to imagine a more variegated assembly of youth between the ages of eighteen and thirty. They all, with the exception of Clark Hanson, camped in the summer resort above the river—Deanwood Park. Four weeks ago hardly any of them had been acquainted with the others. But summer-camp friendships grow easily and rapidly. In fact, it was rumored that there was at least one engagement in the redwooded camp this early in the season.

Clark Hanson, who owned a white motorboat and lived a mile farther up the river, at Deanville, purposely found a place for himself beside Gladys.

Though she did not particularly relish this young man, who was reputed a bit wild, she concealed any animosity she felt until he began speaking in tones meant for her ears alone. For an impatient, cheek-crimsoning minute she listened, then: "Why, Mr. Hanson! You surprise me!" she retorted indignantly. "What ever put such a foolish notion into your head? I'll ease you at once. Unconditionally, no!"

"But, Gladys——"

"Call me Miss Dennison, please, Mr. Hanson, and don't ever mention this subject to me again." And not desirous of creating a scene she controlled her emotions as best she could, and rose to her feet. She left him and plunged at once into the midst of the group made up of Sumner, Winslow and Beatrice Hollister.

"What's the matter, Glady's?" queried George Sumner, nearly encircling her plump brown arm with his massive hand.

"Nothing. Why?" mischievously.

"I was just wondering why you left Clark so suddenly. He didn't——"

"None of your business what he did, smarty," and she made a funny face at him.

"Oh, I don't blame any one for asking you to marry him," said Sumner with stupid indelicacy. "But Clark—you wouldn't think of——"

"Don't let that worry you, George. But please let go of my arm. You'll have it a permanent black-and-blue if you aren't a little more careful."

Sumner released his grip. He was big, but he was not over-bright. Somehow he reminded one of an overgrown infant. He was good-natured as a rule, but would be a bad man to have for an opponent if once he were enraged. He was as strong as a concrete arch.

Though he had let go of her arm, he would not take his eyes from her for a moment. He adored the very sand she sat on.

Gladys, in her turn, had grown to think a great deal of the big fellow, but more after the manner in which one cares for a faithful Newfoundland dog. It was easy for her to shift her gaze from his face, and she did it deliberately for, maiden-like, she loved to tease him.

Clark Hanson, suddenly finding himself left alone, muttered something under his breath. Then spying Wilton Dennison off by himself, digging his toes into the hot sand, and allowing the sun to deepen the brown of his shoulders, he crawled over beside him.

Wilton, who had been watching his sister and Hanson out of the corners of his eyes, and who hadn't a great deal of use for Clark, save as an opponent in the frequent cooncan games the two played for not extremely moderate stakes, spoke rather sharply:

"I don't want to see you bothering my sister, Hanson. I don't mind playing cards with you, but I can see that Gladys doesn't care to have you pay her undue attehtion."

"Oh, bother it, Wilton! I wasn't hurting her. Besides, she's the one to tell me to quit, isn't she?"

"Seems to me from her expression that she did intimate as much to you, and I'm only advising you to comply with her wishes. Get me?" He lifted his light-blue eyes to the other's dark face.

"Oh, all right—if you want to put it that plainly. But it seems to me you ought not object to her being friends with the company you keep yourself."

"That has nothing whatever to do with the matter," contested Wilton with finality. "I'm going to get dressed. Believe George's cold must be contageous. I've got a little myself. Coming?" He wound up with a sneeze.

Together they walked to their rooms in the long bath house. The others, seeing that they were going to dress,

leisurely decided to do likewise, and they wandered in by ones and twos.

Fifteen minutes later Clark Hanson, his Panama hat settled on one side of his black head, after one ingratiating glance in Gladys' direction—it was not returned—boarded his motorboat, the *White Rabbit*, started the engine, and was soon out of sight around the bend, a furlong above.

Wilton Dennison, emitting another sneeze, and noticing the corner of a purple muffler hanging from Dave Winslow's pocket, withdrew it gingerly, and did not speak until he had it wrapped around his neck.

Then: "I'm going to wear this up to camp, Dave. Got a touch of cold," he grinned.

It is doubtful if Dave half took in what he was talking about; he was too engrossed in Gladys' sprightly chatter.

George Sumner, in silk shirt and khaki trousers, approached Wilton and, drawing him a little ahead of the others, began with him the ascent of the steep embankment whose crest would bring them to the level of the park.

"Why do you keep going with that guy, Wilton?" the big-limbed fellow asked, turning to make sure that the others were out of earshot. "Clark Hanson's not our kind. I'll wager he isn't playing on the square in the card-game. How can he be, when he's got such a rotten reputation in Deanville?"

"Do you mean to insinuate that Hanson's a crook?" demanded Wilton angrily.

"I'm only judging from the talk I heard at Deanville. I don't see how he can be anything else. It's the talk of the town that he's doing some one here at the camp.

"Is that straight?"

"Straight as a piston-rod. Has he dug so very deep into your jeans yet, Wilton?"

"He has won quite a bit," Dennison admitted reluctantly.

"How much—if you don't mind telling me? It'll never go any further."

"I hate to own up to it, George; but he's won nearly four hundred dollars. Of course mother and Gladys don't suspect that we're playing for anything but the most trivial stakes. And they buck like steers at that. If they suspected how much I am risking there's no telling what they'd do. But keep that under your bonnet."

"I will," said Sumner soberly. "But it's bad business, Wilton. They say in town that Hanson is a regular shark at cards. You play fairly well yourself, don't you?"

Dennison took from his pocket the odd-shaped pipe with the figure of a little imp squatted on the stem. He filled it with cube-cut and lighted it before replying. "I've always imagined I played a good stiff hand," he said thoughtfully.

"Then I don't see how he could have pronged you for that much by honest means. I'd cut him out if I were you." George nodded his head sharply for emphasis.

"I've invited him to camp this evening, and I can't very well renege now. Last time I won ten or fifteen dollars, and I'm in hopes of taking him down a peg to-night. But if I should catch him trying to put over anything underhanded——" he finished significantly.

"If you've invited him," commented Sumner, "I suppose he'll have to come. All I can say is: be cautious."

By now they had reached the main path, and they separated, each going to his own camp to leave his bathing-suit.

Half an hour later the crowd gathered again, in the pavilion, to decorate for the evening's dance. Below, the little river rippled in the diagonal sun-rays.

Although Wilton did not care for dancing, he was perfectly willing to help with the decorating and, pipe in mouth, he was soon up on a stepladder, taking up bunting and festoons, and hanging gaudy Chinese lanterns.

The ornamentations in place to the artistic satisfaction of the feminine element, the little crowd paired off for a before-supper walk. Wilton strode off down a by-path with Grace Knapp at his elbow, Dave Winslow strolled with Gladys Dennison. George Sumner, after watching the latter pair out of sight, was bound to escort the only girl left—young Beatrice Hollister.

As was usually the case when a fellow found himself alone with Miss Dennison, Dave Winslow felt himself waxing romantic, and when Gladys had hushed him he began talking of Clark Hanson, the handsome, dark-skinned sport of Deanville.

"Just let me know if he bothers you, Gladys," he began pugnaciously, drawing up his little shoulders until they nearly reached the height of hers.

"Oh, I can take care of myself, never fear, Dave," she bantered lightly. "I wonder why it is that every one takes such an interest in Mr. Hanson? Why, everybody that has spoken to me this afternoon has mentioned his name. He doesn't seem to be such a bad sort," she tested.

"You don't know as much about him as I do, Gladys," said Dave meditatively.

"I can't understand it," she went on. "Every one seems to have such a dislike for the poor fellow. It almost makes me feel sorry for him." Her eyes twinkled, but they were turned away from her companion.

"Don't waste your sympathy on the likes of him," he advised her earnestly.

"Does it affect you that badly, Dave?" she asked, almost laughing aloud.

"Gladys, I can't bear even to have you talk to anybody but me. I'm jealous. I'll admit it. But—but—I'd do anything in the world for you, Gladys," he finished grandiloquently, but lamely.

"There, there, Dave, don't get sentimental. I can't stand you when you do. I like you, of course. But look how young we both are. Don't be foolish."

"But you'll let me fill in your dance-program to-night, Gladys?" he begged.

"No, I'll not, you silly boy!" Then she softened. "You'll have your fair share, Dave—but not a monopoly. And there! That reminds me. We have forgotten to provide for the refreshments. Oh, Mr. Sumner!" she called, seeming to sense that he could not be far away.

"Yes," his familiar voice eagerly responded, and he came on a run, Miss Hollister deserted summarily.

"George, we forgot the ice-cream. You be real nice and row up to Deanville after supper for it. You will, won't you?"—Miss Hollister had just come into sight—"to oblige me."

There wasn't a young man in camp she couldn't handle just that easily.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT GEORGE SUMNER SAW

AT seven o'clock Sumner took his oars and rowlocks down to the river, and in a few minutes he was rowing lustily upstream. He reached Deanville a little after half-past seven, and leaving his boat staked he made his way through the sand up to town.

As he walked up the main street he saw Clark Hanson swinging along, evidently slightly under the influence of alcohol. He would have paid no attention to the sport

if Clark hadn't veered from his course and run squarely into the big man from Deanwood Park. Without thinking, Sumner gave the sleek-faced one a shove that landed him in a heap in the gutter.

Hanson immediately let loose a vile stream of imprecations after Sumner, who had moved on about his business; but the latter pretended not to hear.

But he really did hear the man in the gutter call vindictively: "I'll get you for that!"

Dismissing the episode from his mind, Sumner hurried on and soon arrived at the ice-cream parlor, where he secured a large-sized freezer of the ice.

It was heavy, even for him. Consequently some time elapsed before he reached the river. He set the freezer on the stern-seat of his boat and lit his pipe before he pushed off. The water was almost as smooth as a mirror.

George, who by nature was lazy, decided to steer with an oar and let the craft drift with the current. He lay back at his ease and watched the dim river banks drift by. It was twilight, and the lights of the various cottages along the river-side shone bright as gold.

He had drifted perhaps half the distance to Deanwood Park when he heard a loud chug-chugging from behind, and became aware that a motorboat was coming downstream.

"And it's coming, too!" he muttered. "Why the deuce doesn't it show a light? I might be run down as easy as not."

Closer and closer came the motorboat, and Sumner, not caring to be rammed, steered his rowboat over to the bank.

A moment later, amid a flying of spray, it skimmed past. A glimpse—not very distinct—of its white-hatted engineer, and it was gone. But the wave its propeller created nearly capsized Sumner's little flat-bottom.

"I missed you that time, confound you!" he heard an angry voice from the motorboat call out, after it had whisked from sight. "I'll get you next time!"

"By Jove! It's that skunk of a Hanson!" exclaimed Sumner. "I didn't think he was that dangerous. Why, he intended to run me down!"

He steered his boat out into the center of the stream again and let her glide along.

"They oughtn't let a fellow like him loose on the river at night," the big fellow brooded. "He's not the sort of company for Wilton—that's a cinch. And if I ever see him open his mouth to Gladys again I—I'll tan him proper!"

His craft swung around the bend above Deanwood Park, and here and there a lighted tent stood out like a ghost in contrast to the semi-gloom about them. Farther downstream, in the distance, he could make out the Chinese lanterns hanging in the open-air dancing pavilion. He intended to drift all the way to the pavilion, so that he wouldn't have to carry the heavy freezer of ice-cream any farther than necessary.

He could distinguish the sound of a piano being played, certain notes floating more distinctly to his ears than others. He puffed leisurely at his pipe, which had nearly burned out. He chanced to glance up at the right river bank.

High up he could discern a brilliantly lighted tent. On the white canvas was distinctly thrown the shadow of a man rocking back and forth in a chair, what looked like an open book in his hand, an odd-shaped pipe in his mouth.

The shadow, even at this distance, somehow seemed very familiar. George's eyes roved lower down the bank, to the water's edge, where he could faintly make out the white hull of a motor-boat. He was drifting slowly on, when he raised his eyes for one more look at the rocking shadow on the tent wall.

"Why, it's the Dennison camp, of course!" he comprehended all at once. "That must be Wilton rocking. Of course it is! I suppose he's waiting for Hanson."

Suddenly another figure came between him and the lighted tent—a figure that seemed, in the half-light, to skulk along the side of the tent. The figure came to a halt near the right-hand corner of the canvas structure.

"Hanson, I'll bet!" exclaimed Sumner. "Why in the mischief is he sneaking along like that?"

He swung the boat in toward the shore, his eyes glued on the tent seventy-five feet up the steep embankment.

The figure he was watching appeared to be peering into the tent. Of a sudden it got to its feet and disappeared for a moment around the flap end. An instant later it reappeared, but this time Sumner felt certain that he was no longer watching a silhouette, but a shadow. He was sure the figure now was inside the tent.

Fascinated, he watched on.

The shadow of the man with the strange-shaped pipe was still rocking and reading, evidently unaware of the other man's presence.

With widened eyes Sumner observed the shadow he felt morally certain was Clark Hanson's move slowly toward the shadow he was equally certain was Wilton Dennison's. The newcomer seemed to give a sudden lurch forward and spring toward the rocking man.

At that precise instant Sumner's row-boat ran ashore, and very nearly tumbled the big fellow into the water.

When next he looked toward the tent both figures had vanished. The rocker was still in sight, but now it was empty. Sumner could not detect a sign of life inside the tent. The two men were no longer there, or else they were on the far side of the light, which was still burning.

A premonition came over George Sumner that Clark Hanson's purpose had been to do young Dennison violence—else why his mysterious actions?

Thoroughly alarmed, he jumped from the boat and began a stumbling ascent of the steep, bush-covered slope. He was perhaps half-way to the top when the sound of heavily crunching footsteps far to his right arrested him.

He turned and set out immediately in the direction the noise came from, but before he had made much headway he heard the grating sound of a boat being shoved off. Almost immediately came to his ears the chug-chugging of a motor, and the swish of a propeller that told him Hanson was out of his reach for the present.

He decided to hurry up the slope to the tent, which was still brilliantly aglow, and as he made the climb he strove to prepare himself to meet he knew not what.

At approximately half-past eight, the pavilion dance having been in progress for half an hour, Dave Winslow dropped to a seat on the bench beside Gladys Dennison. "George ought to be back inside another half-hour with the ice-cream," he said. "But in the meantime nothing would be more welcome than a little walk with you. What do you say, Gladys?"

"I'm willing—if you'll promise not to wax romantic," she qualified, with a quaint little toss of her brown head.

Winslow believed a brown skin to be the prettiest kind of a skin in the world. It set off deep-blue eyes remarkably well, too, he reflected. But possibly he was prejudiced—for Glady's head embodied just this combination.

They strolled along the path that wound its way between the giant redwoods, and had walked for about five minutes when Winslow slowed down.

"I've forgotten my muffler," he explained, as he searched

his pockets. "My camp is only a few paces over there. It's apt to grow chilly before the dance breaks up, and I ought to get it. You aren't afraid to wait here just a jiffy, are you, Gladys? I'll run, and I'll be right back."

"Run along," laughed Miss Dennison. "I'm not one of your timid little 'fraidy cats. Not me!" She drew herself very erect.

Dave scampered off.

But he was gone longer than he had promised. She really began to wonder why he did not return. Five minutes had passed, she was certain. Why on earth didn't he come?

She was meditating whether to return to the pavilion alone or to go in search of him, when his form loomed up before her. He had been absent over ten minutes.

"Why, what kept you so long, Dave?" she questioned. "The idea of your leaving me alone here——"

"I couldn't find the plagued thing," he confessed sheepishly. "I wonder where in the mischief I could have put it? I don't see. I had it in my pocket down at the beach this afternoon, and——" Suddenly it dawned on him. "One of the boys grabbed it to come to camp in. I was so busy listening to what you were saying at the time, Gladys, that I hardly noticed it. Your——"

"Oh, well, never mind, Dade," she cut in. "You won't catch your death of cold. See me. I never bundle myself up."

"Neither would I—if I had your splendid physique," he replied admiringly.

"None of your flattery, please, Dave," she scolded. "Remember what I told you. I can't tolerate you when you're silly. Let's hurry back to the pavilion. They'll be wondering what has become of us. Besides, I've promised several dances, and I don't want to miss one of them," she finished emphatically.

So they hastened on through the darkness. Three or four minutes later they arrived at the pavilion, aglow with a myriad Chinese lanterns.

Dave Winslow discovered, to his delight, that Gladys was down on his program for the next dance. It was a waltz, and although it was not overwell rendered by the piano-accordion orchestra, he enjoyed it immensely. Both Gladys and he were accomplished dancers, and it demanded expert footwork to negotiate the humps and hollows of the rough board floor and avoid tripping.

"I wonder why George doesn't come with the ice-cream?" said Gladys as she released Dave's arm and dropped to a bench. "I'll wager he's gone and eaten it all up. Just like him, anyway. I do wish he'd hurry. My throat is fairly parched."

But the big-bodied George Sumner hadn't eaten the ice-cream. Far from it!

The gathering in the pavilion suddenly became aware of the rapid crunch of heavy feet on the graveled pathway, and an instant later George Sumner plunged into their midst—pale, ghastly pale, breathless and excited.

"Man alive, what's the matter?" gasped little Dave Winslow, rising in confusion.

"Matter enough!" George panted. "Something beastly has happened at the Dennison camp. Blood on the floor and——"

"What!" screamed Mrs. Dennison. "Where is Wilton? Is he hurt? Oh, my——" and she nearly fainted into the arms of Dave Winslow, who had stepped to her side.

"What do you mean, George? Tell me quickly!" prodded Gladys, pale, but steady on her feet. "What do you mean?"

"Why, when I was nearly here in the boat, you know," George began dazedly, "I happened to look up the river bank and I saw your brother rocking and reading in your tent. That is, I saw his shadow on the canvas." Sumner was recovering his wind now. He sank to a bench and went on: "Pretty soon I saw another person in the tent with Wilton—sneaking up on him, it looked like. And then——"

"Whom did you see?" interrupted Gladys.

"Hanson it was. Yes, I'm sure it was Clark Hanson, because he passed me in his motor-boat on his way downstream. As I was saying, he sprang at your brother, Gladys. But just then——"

"What then?" came excitedly from the throng which had gathered around the befuddled fellow.

"Then my boat ran ashore and nearly tipped me out. I got out right away, but when I looked up at the tent again no one was in sight. The light was still burning, but the tent was empty."

"Oh, what can have happened to Wilton?" cried Gladys, clenching her brown fists in nervousness. She turned to fan her mother with a handkerchief. "Hurry, Mr. Sumner," she went on impatiently. "Tell us the rest."

"I heard somebody moving about in the brush to my right, and I started out after him; but he reached the motor-boat before I could get anywhere near it. A minute later he was gone up the river. That scoundrel, Hanson——"

"And then what?"

"I rushed up to the tent. No one was inside. But there was blood on the floor, and——"

"Oh, dear me!" escaped Gladys Dennison's drawn lips, and she almost lost the wonderful control she had maintained up to now.

"And then I ran down here to the pavilion as fast as I could to let you know about it," Sumner finished. "Hadn't we better get lanterns and go look for Wilton? I'm sure something has happened to him." The big youngster was pale and nervous. Obviously he was laboring under deep emotion.

"Right you are, George," coincided Dave Winslow, at once taking the initiative. "But I believe it would be best for the women-folk to remain here."

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIND

EACH man dashed to his own camp for a lantern, then ran with all possible haste to the Dennison plot.

There they found everything as Sumner had described it. The lamp was still burning and there were signs of a struggle near one of the cot beds. On the floor were large splotches of dark brown, and under the table, on which, wonder of wonders, stood the overturned lamp, was a book, probably the one George Sumner had seen in shadow on the tent wall. For there were no other books in sight.

Dave Winslow stooped and picked it up.

"Ugh!" he cried, as it opened itself in his hand. He dropped it but picked it up again gingerly.

It was a copy of Stevenson's "Treasure Island," but where it had opened, at pages sixty-two and sixty-three, the print could hardly be read for the tell-tale stain that covered the leaves. The top corner of page sixty-two was creased over on itself, as though to mark the place where the blood might be found.

More than one face whitened tensely at sight of the grim, grewsome volume.

On a box near the table was part of a loose pack of cards. Five or six of the pasteboards lay scattered on the floor. On the table beside the lamp stood a bottle labeled "Higley's White Ink."

"This sure looks bad for Wilton," announced Dave Winslow gravely. "What can Hanson have done to him? Where has he taken him? You don't suppose he could have dragged him down to the motor-boat?" he questioned the big-muscled George Sumner.

"If he did, he's a lot stronger than I gave him credit for being," answered George. "Besides, I saw him in town early this evening, and he was half drunk."

"Possibly that supplied him with the necessary nerve and strength," suggested Charlie Knapp, who was younger than the others, and whose face was white in horror. Hadn't we better search the underbrush between here and the river," he asked quaveringly.

"A good idea," agreed Dave. "The three of us can spread out and cover quite a bit of territory in a short time. But first, Charlie, I believe you had better go and inform the park authorities of what has happened. They ought to know about it. They'll probably want to send some one to town to spread the alarm. For surely we don't want Hanson to get away."

So Charlie Knapp departed on his errand. In five minutes he joined them again.

"They're going to send Bolton to town right away," he informed them. "They know where Hanson usually hangs out, and it oughtn't to be so very hard to find him. Bolton'll give word for a sharp look-out for the *White Rabbit*, too."

"Well, let's get out with our lanterns, then," said Dave, picking up his from the floor.

The three young men started down the embankment, slowly picking their way back and forth among the dense growths of bushes and vines that clustered the steep slope.

"Here's something!" called Dave ten minutes later.

Charlie Knapp and George Sumner ran to where he stood peering at the ground.

"Hanson must have come this way," Winslow explained. "See how the bushes are all trampled down? Let's follow this trail. We may run across something before it leads us to the water edge. By Jove! What is this?"

He stooped over and picked up a long kitchen knife, the blade of which was spattered here and there with a disagreeable, dark-colored substance.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed for the second time that evening. "I'm afraid things haven't gone well with Wilton."

They walked slowly on down to the river's edge—no one having the heart to speak; but, though they kept their eyes open, they ran across nothing more that was suggestive. By the light of their lanterns they could distinguish the impression the prow of the motor-boat had left in the damp sand and gravel.

They wandered along the shore for another half-hour, but finally they gave up the search and started back for the tent of the tragedy.

The women-folk had not been able to remain away from the grewsome camp scene, and they awaited the three young men as they climbed the bank.

"What's that?" gasped Miss Dennison, catching sight of the blade of the knife Dave Winslow was trying to hide behind his back—on seeing that the girls were present.

"Why did you come here, Gladys?" he asked reproachfully. "It's no place for you girls. You had better turn around and go right back to the pavilion."

"Tell me what you've got behind you, Dave. Tell me this instant!" Gladys' voice was almost hysterical.

"Something we found down the bank," he replied soberly. "Something it won't do you any good to look at."

"Oh!" she sighed. "And you found no trace of Wilton—no sign of my brother?"

"No, Gladys," he confessed softly. "But you must prepare yourself for any eventuality."

"Then, you think—you think—that he—he—has been hurt—or—mur——"

"Come, Gladys!" he interrupted sharply. "Let's get away from here. It's no place for you." He took her gently by the arm and persuaded her to walk with him.

Mrs. Dennison followed, supported by the strong arm of George Sumner.

"I wouldn't worry so, Mrs. Dennison," the big fellow tried to quiet her. "We have no positive proof that Wilton has been hurt. We don't know where he is, to be sure; but that is not saying that any harm has befallen him."

"But—but—all the disorder. Some one has been hurt. Oh, my poor boy! What has happened to you?" She was a frail little woman, and began to sway dizzily.

But George steadied her as best he could, and they finally reached the Knapp camp site. Arrangements were made for Gladys and her mother to remain there overnight.

"But what if Wilton should return during the night?" protested Gladys Dennison. "He wouldn't know where to find us. Oh, what has become of my brother!" she sobbed, then sank into the folds of a canvas camp chair and wept silently.

"We young fellows will stay at your camp to-night, Gladys," explained Winslow. "If Wilton comes back—though I hardly think it likely—he will find us there. And you may be certain we'll let you know of his safety at once. Try to sleep a little. You'll both need all the strength you can muster for to-morrow. Come on, fellows, let's be getting back."

"Good-night, Gladys, and you, too, Mrs. Dennison," said big George Sumner awkwardly. "We can at least hope for good news by morning." And he led the way to the Dennison camp.

"They shouldn't experience much difficulty in getting hold of Clark Hanson," began Dave Winslow, when the three—George and Dave smoking—were seated in the tent of the tragedy. "And when they do find him we'll at least know what has become of Wilton. That will be better than this oppressive uncertainty. But I fear the worst, boys. How do you feel about it?"

"A whole lot like you do," stated Sumner, his eyes on the rough board tent platform. "I don't see why he carried Wilton off, unless the worst has happened." He crossed his legs and rested his feet on a low stool.

Though they were greatly worked-up over the problem of young Dennison's disappearance, yet they would not remain awake all night. One by one they dozed off.

At about one o'clock in the morning they were awakened by the sound of a horse's galloping hoofbeats, seemingly on the main path of the park.

That must be Bolton returning from Deanville," commented Dave, sitting up with a start. "Maybe he has some news for us. I wonder if he'll ride around here to our camp?" He got to his feet, and stumbled over Sumner's stool as he went to raise the tent flap.

Bolton did ride to their tent, but he had no very encouraging tidings. Men had gone down to the river, but had been unable to find a trace of Hanson's motor-boat, the *White Rabbit*. And, needless to add, Clark Hanson had not been seen since early in the evening.

The Deanville boatman, however, who lived in a shack

on the beach, had heard, a little before nine o'clock, a motor-boat traveling at a furious rate up the river. It had not so much as slowed down at Deanville, though, and he couldn't say whether or not it had been Hanson's *White Rabbit*.

"Of course it was Hanson's!" exploded Dave Winslow. "He's gone on up the river a way, thinking he can catch a train in the morning and make good his escape. He's probably disposed of Wilton's body long before this." (Though no one had spoken of Wilton as being dead up to now, yet it was easy to see that that thought had been in all their heads.) "I wonder if he would be fool enough to throw it overboard? It would be found to-morrow, sure, if he did. More likely he took it ashore somewhere and buried it. That would be the more feasible plan."

Bolton listened hungrily to these surmises. The morbid seemed to attract him strangely. When he had heard all they had to say, he left them to report to the camp authorities.

"Don't you think one of us should take the first train in the morning and keep a sharp look-out for Hanson at every station?" was Charlie Knapp's suggestion.

"There'll be plenty of folks watching the trains, I guess," returned Winslow. "But the idea's all right, Charlie. What if you go yourself?"

"Sure. Don't let me oversleep, then."

"Never fear for that. I won't sleep another wink to-night," put in George Sumner, who had not talked very much up to the present. George had been greatly shaken up by what he had witnessed from his row-boat.

"Of course," said Dave, "the river will have to be dragged in the morning, but I doubt if it will do any good. Hanson wouldn't be fool enough to make that sort of disposal of the body."

Next morning, after a light, tasteless breakfast, Charlie Knapp left them, his destination the station at the entrance to Deanwood Park.

Shortly after six the train arrived, and a little later Dave and Sumner walked down to the camp where Mrs. Dennison and Gladys had spent the night.

The long hours before dawn had agreed miserably with both of them, and they could be made no more comfortable by the report that Bolton had brought back from Deanville.

At eight o'clock the task of dragging the river was commenced. The current was sluggish and the work not overdifficult. But by noon it was given up as a bad job. This was the way Dave had expected it to turn out.

Charlie Knapp returned on the noon train, but Dave Winslow could forecast from his expression that his news if news he brought, would be disappointing.

"No," Charlie greeted them, as he stepped from the train. "I looked everywhere—talked with every one—but not a sight or a word of Hanson or his motor-boat could I find. I left word at Edgton Station for a search of that part of the river for the *White Rabbit*, but I don't know how it will come out."

"Oh, the motor-boat will be found, all right enough," asserted Winslow confidently. "It can't have disappeared from the river unless Hanson has sunk it. Even that might be a possibility, though," he added reflectively.

At two o'clock that afternoon Dave Winslow, who was sitting outside the Dennison camp in a tent chair, looking out over the river, saw an excited youngster emerge from the bushes that lined the opposite bank of the Russian, jump into a small row-boat, and row for all he was worth toward the near shore.

"What in the mischief has put the fright into him?" exclaimed Winslow, rising. He ran down the steep slope to the river edge to meet the young oarsman.

"What's the matter, Carl?" he asked, as the boat touched the beach. He had recognized the lad as one of a party of campers at the lower end of the park.

"Up in the old cabin!" panted the overwrought youngster. "They was blood all over outside, and the door was shut tight." He paused for breath.

"Go on! Go on!" Dave coaxed him.

"I peeked in through a hole in the wall, and—and they's some one laying down in there, Mr. Winslow. It's a man," his shaking voice concluded.

"Lord!" groaned Dave. "It's poor Wilton." Then he turned to the camp above, and cupping his palms, called: "Oh, boys! Come on down, quick! Make the girls stay where they are. Come on, George, and you, too, Charlie."

The forms of Sumner and Charlie Knapp appeared almost instantly, and the two scrambled down the bank, and at Dave's gesture jumped into Carl's boat.

"What's up, Dave?" they asked in one breath.

"I'm afraid it's all up with Wilton," he answered solemnly. "Carl has just come from across the river, and he says there's a body in the old cabin on the other side."

George Sumner's powerful arms propelled the little boat through the water like a racing shell. They were out, and running up the bank, where, hidden among the redwoods and wild berry vines, was an ancient, tumble-down, board shack.

Dave Winslow splintered the rotten door with one lusty kick. He peered through the jagged hole, then leaped back in sheer amazement at what he saw inside.

For, spread out on the musty, loam-covered floor of the old deserted cabin, an ugly slash at its throat, lay a body, a body that Dave instantly identified—the body of Clark Hanson, the Deanville sport!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CORONER ARRIVES

"MY LORD!" exclaimed the dumfounded Dave Winslow, as he turned and stared stupefied into the faces of his companions.

Charlie Knapp took one brief look at the shanty's interior, then drew back for Sumner to see. Three badly shaken young fellows demolished what remained of the door.

"What can this mean?" demanded Dave Winslow tensely. Neither of his companions vouchsafed a word, and he continued: "Can it be possible that Wilton——"

Sumner found his tongue, but the big fellow spoke brokenly, under severe stress. He was shaking like a leaf. "Wilton—couldn't have had a hand in this, fellows. We know he couldn't! It must have been some one else whose shadow I saw on the tent side! It couldn't have been Wilton."

"He might have done it in self-defense," suggested Charlie, who had turned his back on the body.

"It's a cinch," declared Dave, "that he couldn't have done it under any circumstances."

"I agree with you there, Dave," put in George. "But I don't see how he could have done it at all. You remember, I saw Hanson spring at the man I thought was Wilton."

"Yes, but your boat ran ashore just then, and your attention was diverted elsewhere for the moment. Maybe during that time Wilton could have gained the upper hand."

"Possibly, but I doubt it, Dave. He wouldn't have killed the man, would he?" Sumner spoke awesomely.

"Who else could have killed him? It must have been Wilton you saw in the tent, George. We know he intended to wait there for Hanson. Clark couldn't have committed suicide and then carried himself across the river, could he?"

"And the stabbing must have taken place in the tent," Charlie Knapp reminded them. "Remember the blood there—and the knife we found among the bushes." He shuddered involuntarily.

"It must be as you say," admitted Sumner. "But what motive could Wilton have had?"

"To protect himself, of course," stated Winslow. Then he became thoughtful. "He's been losing money right along to Hanson," he went on half-aloud. "He might have suspected that Hanson was cheating him. And he might have accused him of it with the result——" His voice died out significantly.

"But you don't think that could have prompted him to do—this thing?" George persisted.

"Who knows? At any rate, he seems to have made good his escape. Why should he have flown if he wasn't responsible?"

"Maybe he hasn't. Maybe we'll find him dead somewhere. Maybe there was a third party. Maybe some one else killed Hanson."

"Preposterous, Sumner? And I for one am not very sorry for Hanson. I am for Wilton, though. I only hope he manages to keep out of sight."

"So do I," chipped in Charlie loyally. He still had his back turned to the body. The grewsomeness of it all was too much for his young nerves.

"And me, too," asserted George Sumner. "But somehow I can't help feeling——"

"Let's not talk about it any more now," advised Dave Winslow. "The Lord knows it will be hard enough to tell the lady-folk about it, though I'm sure it will make them feel lots easier concerning Wilton's welfare. Who'll volunteer to tell them?" He glanced expectantly into the sober faces of his companions.

Neither George nor Charlie spoke.

"I suppose that means I've got to do it myself, then," said Dave resignedly. "Some one has to."

"Yes; you can do it best, Dave," argued George Sumner. "I hardly know which end I stand on, and I'm afraid that if I got to talking to them, I'd get the whole thing messed, and arouse new fears in their minds."

"Perhaps you're right, George."

"Hadn't somebody ought to notify the coroner?" queried Charlie Knapp."

"Yes, Charlie," replied Dave. "We must do so at once. Do either of you know where to find him?"

"In Deanville, I suppose," answered Charlie.

"Well," pondered Dave, "we'll row across to the other side. Then see if you can't get to the station in time to catch the next train for Deanville, Charlie. It leaves in about fifteen minutes, I think."

They crossed the river, and found the girls, burning with curiosity, awaiting their return. Charlie jumped ashore and hurried for the station.

"Oh, Dave," cried Gladys Dennison. "What have you found? Tell me. But don't say that——"

"Don't worry, my girl. Calm yourself—you, too, Mrs. Dennison. The body we found——"

"Oh, Wilton!" cried Mrs. Dennison, hysterically. "I——"

"No; not Wilton," Dave reassured them, gently. "Wilton's all right, I imagine. The body we found in the little cabin across the river is Clark Hanson's."

"Thank God it wasn't Wilton," breathed the relieved Mrs. Dennison fervently. "But, my boy——" Then she seemed to realize that something was wrong. "Was he—Mr. Hanson—was he killed?"

Dave nodded a sober affirmative.

"And no sign of Wilton?"

"No"—slowly.

She was silent a moment, then she spoke fervently. "God be thanked. Don't tell me any more, Mr. Winslow. I know that Wilton is not guilty of any wrong-doing."

"Why, of course he isn't, mother," Gladys soothed her. She took the older woman's hand in her own, and patted it gently. "No one even suggested such a thing, did they, Mr. Winslow?"

"No, Gladys," he replied. But she could not help noticing how he averted his gaze from her face.

George Sumner, big man that he was, could no longer endure the display of feminine emotion. Bidding them an awkward good-by, he set out for his own camp, saying, as he left: "Send for me if you need me, Gladys."

"I will, George," she smiled. She could understand the big fellow's feelings even if the others could not. Sadly she turned again to Dave.

Winslow had been watching her eyes, but the minute she looked into his he could stand it no longer, and immediately turned and looked out across the river.

"You'll be all right alone for a few minutes, mother, won't you?" asked Gladys, as she kissed her tenderly on the cheek.

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Dennison. "But why, dear?"

"I want to take a little walk with Dave. I won't be gone long. We'll be right back."

Mrs. Dennison lay listlessly back in her chair, and Gladys turned to Winslow.

"Come on, Dave," she smiled bravely.

Dave Winslow came to her side and fell into step with her as they left the camp and strolled toward the dancing pavilion.

"Dave," Gladys asked, as soon as they were out of her mother's earshot. "Dave, what do you know? What are you keeping back? Don't be afraid to tell me."

"I don't know anything, Gladys," he replied uncomfortably.

"Please tell me, Dave. At least you think something. Haven't I the right to know it? I have perfect control of myself. Please tell me, Dave."

The appeal in her voice sank home and loosened his awkward tongue. "I was thinking, Gladys——"

"Yes? It's about Wilton, isn't it? I knew it," she added as he nodded affirmatively.

"Yes; it's about Wilton," he said slowly. "I don't like to suggest any more trouble to you, but to me it looks as though the lad were in bad."

"How do you mean, Dave?"

"Why has he disappeared—if he didn't have to?"

"You mean you think he—he had something to do with the—the death of Mr. Hanson?"

"It looks that way, Gladys. Not that I think he could have killed Clark deliberately," he hastened to add. "In my opinion they must have quarreled. Wilton may have killed him in self-defense."

"But even that suggestion is horrible, Dave."

"Yes; I know. But many a good man has killed another in order to save his own life. The only thing I can't understand is why Wilton should have picked up the body and carted it across the river, and then have run and hid himself. That's the part I neither like nor can explain."

"Who can tell what his condition may have been at

the time, David? You know Wilton drinks occasionally. I can only imagine him doing such a thing if he were out of his senses—under the influence of liquor."

"That might be," agreed Dave. "But if I had been in Wilton's place I should have come forward and made a bold front, instead of courting suspicion by taking myself out of sight. The law does not punish a man for defending himself."

"Possibly Wilton couldn't prove that he was defending himself," suggested Gladys. "Perhaps he was overwhelmed when he realized what he had done, and then fled in despair."

"Probably so, Gladys. But if I were you I wouldn't say any more than is necessary to your mother about it. She has suffered a severe shock already, and there is no telling how this might affect her. The Lord knows she'll find it out soon enough."

"You have a kind heart, Mr. Winslow. I think I'd better return to mother now."

Looking into her deep blue eyes he obeyed that impulse which told him to kiss her.

After they parted Dave dreamily walked on to his own camp, where his mother awaited him. She listened to his story and at once expressed herd etermination to go help take care of Gladys' mother. He, too, thought the plan a good one.

At four o'clock Winslow crossed the park to the main gate, and sat down on a bench to await the return of Charlie Knapp. He had not been there over fifteen minute when he heard a clatter and rumble on the bridge around the turn toward Deanville, and a minute later a long, black wagon, drawn by a proud, but past-his-prime, horse, creaked up to where he sat.

On the seat were Charlie Knapp and two other men. The one with dark-brown hair and beard Winslow took to be the Deanville coroner, and he was right.

Mr. Adam Post was coroner, undertaker, funeral director, notary public and barber—all rolled into one. He was short and stout, and wore a gray suit and a slouch hat. In his mouth was a quid of tobacco. He was typical of the village of Deanville, which scarcely could boast seventy-five inhabitants—except during the hot summer months, when its population was tenfold greater.

"This is Mr. Post, Winslow," said Charlie Knapp, by way of introduction. "How had we better go? The body is across the river, you know."

"Why, you can drive right over to the Dennison camp, and I'll row you across in the boat. If you'd thought of it, you could have crossed the river at Deanville and come up the other side."

"You better gather up all those who know anything about this affair, Mr. Winslow," said the coroner, with pompous authority. "I am going to conduct my investigation along strict lines. It's late now, and I want to get back to town before dark. I don't see why anything like this has to happen on a Sunday, nohow, when I get double price for haircuts and shaves. How do we get to that camp?" he asked Charlie. The coroner was directed.

While Dave Winslow went to find George Sumner, the coroner drove over to the Dennison camp and tied his horse.

George and Dave soon arrived, and Mr. Post took from the back of his wagon a canvas stretcher. Giving one end of it to his assistant, they made their way down the slope to the river, where a row-boat was awaiting them.

Big George Sumner manned the oars and soon had them across the river, which was not particularly wide at this point. They staked the boat and walked through the brush and undergrowth to the little deserted shack.

There they found everything as they had left it, the door being still open. "Ah, aha," muttered Mr. Adam Post, as he stepped inside and looked down at the upturned face.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

CARL, the boy who had discovered the body in the old shack, must have spread the news, for although no one had as yet ventured to cross the river, as soon as the coroner and his party were seen on the other side, people began to swarm into the little row-boats which lined the river bank on the park side, and to paddle across.

They soon were thickly gathered about the hut, and the coroner evidently did not like it.

"Now all you folks that's got no business over here, just hustle right into your boats and beat it back," he said in no uncertain tones. "That is no place for curiosity-seekers."

"But you'll want to see Carl Granger, won't you, Mr. Post?" asked Charlie.

"The boy that discovered the body? Yes. Is he here?"

"He's over there; I'll get him." And Charlie ran to where the boy, white-faced, was getting back into his boat, on the stern seat of which sat Bolton, the man-of-all-work of Deanwood Park, morbid curiosity in his eyes. It seemed to gall him that he could not accompany Carl to the shack.

"We want you, Carl," said Charlie Knapp.

Carl was badly frightened, but when Charlie took him by the arm he consented to accompany him peaceably to where the body lay.

The coroner had knelt beside the corpse and was examining the wound.

"Huh!" he muttered. "Stabbed three times, and deep stabs they were, too! Some sort of a wide-bladed knife, I should say. Haven't seen anything of one, have you?" He turned and asked the question of George Sumner, who was standing nearest him.

"Why, yes," said George with a shudder. "We picked up such a weapon—a kitchen knife, it was—on the other bank, when we were looking for the body last night." His voice trembled, for sight of Hanson's lifeless body unnerved him.

"Good!" said Mr. Post. "Get me that sheet, Davis," he addressed his assistant. "No need to leave the body uncovered any longer. It's grewsome enough."

Davis brought the sheet that lay rolled up on the stretcher, and the coroner covered the body with it. Then he let his eyes wander about the floor of the shack, but not appearing to see anything of value, he lifted his gaze.

"Well, Hanson 'll never skin any one else out of his money," he said lightly.

"Has he any folks in town?" asked Dave Winslow.

"No one that I know of," said Post. "I don't believe a soul in Deanville would want to own up to a relationship with him," he added contemptuously.

"Where did he stop?"

"At the hotel. Guess I'd better go through his pockets. He may have enough on him to bury himself with." Post seemed to have no sympathy whatever for the dead man.

"What makes you feel so harsh toward him?" Dave could not refrain from asking.

"Guess you would in my place," Post replied coldly. "He ruined my lad. Cleaned him out of all his money, and the poor kid went to the bad quick. He died about a year ago."

"I don't blame you," said Winslow sympathetically.

"No one 'll miss him very much, I reckon," said Post. "And it sure riles me that I have to look for the man that done for him. But it's got to be. We can't evade the law."

"No; of course not," agreed Dave.

"All there's left to do now," said Post, "is to get the body over to the wagon—but, by jingo, I haven't gone through his pockets yet," and he knelt again to do so.

"Thought he might have a roll!" commented the coroner, taking from Hanson's inside pocket a thick bunch of greenbacks. "At any rate, the man that did for him wasn't a thief. Hello! What's this?" He drew from a side pocket a two-pronged instrument mounted with a handle the thickness of a small pencil.

"Let's see it," said Dave. "Oh, that's a drawing pen, such as a mechanical draughtsman uses," he explained. "I wonder what he was doing with that?"

"Can't say, I'm sure," said Post. "Well, Davis, you may as well bring the stretcher."

Then he turned to Carl Granger.

"How did you happen to find this body here?" he asked kindly.

"I was just out for a row," explained the youngster, "and I happened to run my boat in here. I walked up through the grass and bushes, and I happened to see the blood spattered about; so I looked inside the hut. When I saw what was inside I ran for my boat as fast as my legs would carry me, and rowed across the river."

"Good! That's plain and straightforward enough, boy."

Davis came with the stretcher and the men lifted the body up and slid it underneath. The coroner took one end and Davis the other, and they walked with their burden to the boat. Placing it well forward they all crowded in, and George Sumner was about to take up the oars when Carl Granger ran toward them.

"Wait a minute," he called shrilly. "I've just found something else."

The object he held out at arm's-length appeared from a distance to be a piece of dark cloth, but when he came nearer, Dave Winslow became suddenly alert.

"Good heavens!" he gasped in a low voice, and his face turned ashy gray.

"What's the matter with you, Mr. Winslow," asked Post, turning a suspicious eye on him.

"Nothing," said Dave slowly.

"Doesn't look like it," the coroner continued ironically. Then he turned to Carl. "What you got there, boy?" he asked, taking the long strip of cloth from him, looking at it a moment in silence, then dropping it into the bottom of the boat.

It was a long scarf of deep purple. On it were a few dried stains of brown, and in one corner, embroidered in large white letters, were the initials: "D. W."

"Where did you find it, lad?" Post questioned after a moment's thought.

"On the floor in the shack. It must have been under the body."

Post turned to Dave Winslow, who was striving his utmost to preserve an outward calm.

"Mr. Winslow," said the coroner deliberately, "do you recognize this scarf?"

All eyes were focused on Dave as he replied:

"I—I—no—that is—yes," he stammered brokenly. "I mean yes. I ought to be able to identify it. The scarf belongs to me," he finished faintly.

"Then perhaps," said Post dryly, "you can explain its presence in such close proximity to the body."

"No; I can't," asserted Dave bravely. "I haven't the slightest notion how it could have come there."

"When did you have it last?"

"Yesterday afternoon at the beach."

"And you haven't seen it since?"

"No. That is I—no," he finished lamely. "I remember having it last at the beach."

"Mr. Winslow, I fear you are holding something back. You had better tell us all you know."

"I have nothing further to say to you about it," said Dave defiantly.

"Very well. But it puts you in a mighty suspicious position," warned Post.

But Dave Winslow would say no more. He remembered all too clearly now how Wilton had pulled it from his pocket at the beach. But he had decided to say nothing that would entangle the brother of Gladys Dennison, if he could possibly help it. Not for the present, at any rate.

Sumner's strong arms had soon propelled them to the park-side of the river.

After considerable trouble, and with much help, the body was carried up the steep embankment and put inside the black wagon. The coroner questioned George Sumner, and paid close attention to his replies.

George gave him a detailed account of what he had seen from his boat the night before, and of how he had attempted to catch the man who escaped from the tent. He told of having failed in his pursuit, and of how he had climbed up to the tent and found it empty of living persons, and he described the grewsome relics left in it. Then, he said, he had gone immediately to the dancing pavilion and spread the alarm.

After his recital, Post went inside the tent and examined the knife, the book and the general surroundings.

"Rather looks like a struggle," he said. "But what's the name of the fellow who has disappeared?"

"Wilton Dennison," they told him reluctantly.

"Well," Post announced, "there'll have to be a sharp lookout kept for him. Of course, we don't know that he's guilty, but we can't afford to let him slip through our fingers until we do know. But I'll warrant that my jury will give him all the rope he wants to prove that he did it in self-defense. Nobody can hold any very hard feelings toward the man who put Clark Hanson out of the way."

He and his assistant mounted to the seat of the black undertaker's wagon.

"I'll be here again tomorrow afternoon," he said before he drove away. "The inquest will be held right here at the Park, at two o'clock."

The coroner gave his old nag a taste of the whip and soon was out of sight.

Gladys came to Dave's side.

"It was awfully good of you to have your mother come over, Dave," she said. "She seems to know just what to do, and mother's feeling much better now. But, oh, I wish I might hear from Wilton! I don't see why he doesn't return, or send us word, or something. I just know he didn't kill Clark Hanson. Why, he wouldn't hurt a fly. You know that yourself, don't you, Dave?"

"He never was very pugnacious," Winslow assented uneasily. He looked around and saw that George and Charlie had departed. Then he drew a deep breath and decided to talk.

"Gladys," he suggested, "won't you take another little walk with me? I have something of importance I want to say to you. And I want to say it to you alone."

She cast him a questioning look.

"What's the matter with you, Dave? You look as pale

as a ghost. Yes; I'll take a stroll; but it must be a very short one. I mustn't leave mother alone long. Your mother just went back to your camp. I'll go tell mother so she won't call."

A minute later she rejoined him and they started up the walk that led to the station at the Park entrance.

"What is it, Dave?" she questioned, after they had traveled several paces in silence.

"I—I want you to promise me something, Gladys," he stammered embarrassedly. "Will you?"

"What, Dave?" she asked in surprise.

"It's about the walk we took the night of the dance—last night. You remember how long you waited for me?"

"Yes; but what of it?"

"If the coroner should question you to-morrow, please don't mention that episode under any circumstances."

"But why should I?"

"You won't, will you, dear? For heaven's sake don't mention the scarf I was looking for."

She was now thoroughly mystified.

"Why, what has come over you, Dave? Of course I won't say anything you don't want me to. But why—for Wilton's sake?"

Winslow nodded soberly. "But don't ask me about it, Gladys. Promise me, though, not to mention it, won't you?"

"I'll not say a thing about our walk or the scarf."

"Thanks, Gladys. You'll not regret it."

They had reached the station, and were about to turn back when Gladys remarked: "Let's wait till the train comes in, Dave. It's due soon, and I love to see the people get off."

They walked down to the track. The blast of a whistle told that the train was just rounding the curve. In a moment it slowed down and came to a stop before them.

One of the first passengers to alight was Wilton Dennison!

CHAPTER SIX

A CONTRADICTION.

WITH a glad little cry, Gladys flew to her brother's side, and Dave Winslow simply stood staring at the returned boy, sheer amazement in his features.

"The blamed fool!" he explained to himself. "He ought to know enough to stay away. They're certain to find him here, and then it's good-night for Wilton!" For Dave could not see how Wilton Dennison could possibly be innocent.

He walked along beside young Dennison and his sister in a dazed state. He hardly could hear what they were saying. He left them near their camp and continued on to his own.

After eating supper in silence, which disturbed his fond mother, he lit his pipe, and set out for the Dennison camp.

Gladys was the first one to hear his footsteps, and she ran out to meet him.

"Oh, Dave!" she cried gladly. "Wilton had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Hanson's death. He didn't even know Clark had been murdered. I just knew he was innocent, but I'm so happy to hear it from his own lips. Come on in and he'll tell you all about it."

Dave followed her into the tent, which had been thoroughly cleaned out, and now presented none of its grewsome aspect of the night before. He dropped to a seat on one of the cot beds.

Wilton did not seem entirely at his ease. "Just a little tough luck," he said lightly. "Too bad about Hanson, isn't it? And to think that you imagined that I was at the bottom of it, Dave! That was too much," he attempted to laugh. "Me a blood-thirsty murderer, oh, yes!"

But somehow Wilton's tone did not reassure Dave. He didn't relish the way Gladys' brother kept shifting his gaze. It made him feel uncomfortable. Something seemed to tell him that Wilton was not going to reveal all that he knew. Dave felt certain that he was going to hold something back, and, though he liked the boy well, yet he did not like his present attitude.

He did not give voice to his feelings, however; instead, he tried to hide them, as he questioned Wilton.

"What happened to you?" he asked. "You know it looks mighty bad for you, after what George saw in the tent."

"That's what I can't understand myself," said young Dennison, in puzzlement. "Gladys has been telling me what George saw, but I can't make head or tail of it. I was right there, and I didn't see anything of the sort."

"Oh, you were there?" said Winslow significantly, but turning his gaze aside.

"Of course I was there. Where did you think I was? Clark came up to the tent a little after eight. I smelt alcohol on his breath, and asked him if he had brought his flask along. I like a taste now and then," he added, avoiding the eyes of Gladys and his mother. "Clark said he hadn't, but that I could go to town in his boat and bring some back with me if I wanted to.

"The smell of his breath made me yearn for a drink, and though I didn't know very much about running a motor-boat, I took him at his word and went down to the river and started the contraption going."

He paused, then as no one spoke, continued: "It was a fine night on the river—dark, but magnificent. I felt like boating all night. I reached the Deanville landing in less than ten minutes, but I hated to turn in there. The river air was too exhilarating.

"I decided that Clark wouldn't mind if I stayed out a while, so I just kept on going. I must have been half or three-quarters of a mile above Deanville when an accident happened. I wasn't paying very close attention to the steering gear, and the darned boat ran me right in under some overhanging branches and stopped. Just as she stopped one of the branches must have struck me on the head, for I became unconscious. I didn't come to my senses until this afternoon, and I took the first train I could catch for the Park. And that's all there is to my story. You see, you were worried to death over nothing."

But Dave didn't see. In fact, he very much doubted the story Wilton told. He could detect the odor of alcohol that came from young Dennison's direction when he spoke.

"But what could George Sumner have seen when he looked up at the tent?" he inquired. "He saw the shadows of two men plainly enough, and he thought they were you and Hanson."

"I'm blamed if I know," said Wilton. "What do you say if we go find George and compare notes? He must be mistaken. Shadows are deceptive, you know, Dave."

"Yes," agreed Winslow, with a slight touch of sarcasm. "Shadows are deceptive, but——"

"But what?" asked Gladys, who had been watching Dave's face in pained surprise.

"Oh, nothing." Winslow tried to laugh the matter away. "I was merely wondering at the strangeness of the thing. But let's go as you suggested, Wilton, and find George."

He got up and Wilton did likewise.

They set out in the direction of Sumner's camp, but

they had hardly proceeded fifty paces when Dave Winslow halted suddenly in his tracks.

"What's up?" asked Dennison in wonder.

"Plenty, Wilton," Dave returned.

"What do you mean?"

"Let's quit beating about the bush, Wilton," said Winslow pointedly. "I want the straight of this thing. You ought to know that you can't string me with that cock-and-bull story you just pulled in the tent. You may be able to make your mother and sister believe it, but you can't make me."

"What the devil!" ejaculated Wilton angrily. "You've got a crust, Winslow!"

"There's no need to get angry, Wilton," Dave argued with him. "I'm not mad at you; I'm sorry for you. Why did you come back? Your story won't hold water at all. Why not tell the truth instead of beating about the bush? I'll stick by you. I know you didn't murder Hanson deliberately. You must have had good reasons. Can't you see that you are only hurting yourself by deceiving us?"

"But what makes you insist that I killed him when I didn't? I swear I didn't, Dave." He had become calmer now, as he realized that his companion actually believed in his guilt.

"But it looks darned bad, Wilton. You were reading in the tent when Hanson arrived, weren't you?"

"Yes. 'Treasure Island.' I put it aside when he came."

"But have you heard what we found inside the book—on pages sixty-two and sixty-three?"

"No. What?"

"They were literally covered with blood."

"Blood! That does look strange!"

"I should say so."

"But no one could prove that I am responsible for its being there," he said a bit defiantly.

"Possibly not. But you have admitted being alone in the tent with Hanson. You were the last person seen in his company. You were overheard quarreling on the beach Saturday afternoon."

"What of it? Can't you believe in me, Dave?"

"I'd like to. Why don't you explain."

"I don't see anything I can explain," protested Wilton. He was beginning to realize how inevitably the evidence pointed to himself as the slayer of Hanson.

"But that isn't all," said Winslow.

"What? More yet?"

"Yes. For the Lord's sake, man, why don't you tell me all you know?"

"I have," young Dennison persisted; but his gaze was not steady enough to satisfy Winslow.

"You know the scarf you pulled from my pocket on the way home from the beach Saturday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"By George! I don't believe you did kill Hanson," exclaimed Dave. "You couldn't have taken that last question so calmly."

"Then you do believe in me? That I know nothing whatever about Hanson's death? Say you do, Dave!"

Winslow hesitated. "The scarf was found to-day, Wilton."

"Where?"

"In the tumble-down hut across the river. It was found under Hanson's body."

"Lord!"

"But no one knows that you borrowed it from me. If you'll keep still about it, no one needs to."

"Thanks, Dave. But you—won't——"

"Don't worry about me," advised the little fellow. "You have troubles enough of your own. Above all else, don't mention that scarf to Gladys. Don't let her know you had it. Lie about it at the inquest, if you are questioned. For I do believe in you, Wilton."

Dennison's gaze wavered. "It's fierce, Dave! I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't try to. Let's go to see George now, and find out for sure about that shadow business. If we could only prove that you know nothing about the affair, Wilton! I believe you, but will the coroner's jury?"

They walked to Sumner's camp, but did not find him in. He camped alone and occupied one of the smallest tents on the ground.

"Suppose he's out rowing," commented Dave. "He seems to like the river at night."

"Lord, but I'm upset," said Wilton in despair. "Everything seems to point so to——"

"Stiffen up, Wilton," urged Dave Winslow. "Don't let your folks know a word that has passed between us. I'll say good-by for to-night now. I hope to see you looking more cheerful in the morning."

And so they parted.

Dave, thinking deeply, set out for his own camp. He did not go to bed, though. Instead he found his oars and row-locks and took them down to the river. Unfastening his boat, he shoved off and rowed to Deanville. There he sent a telegram to a certain Mr. Robert Buchanan, of Oakland, California.

The following afternoon he walked to the Deanwood Park entrance with Gladys, to await the arival of the one-o'clock train. Several passengers alighted, among them Mr. Post, the coroner. "Well," said Post, as soon as he had spied them. "We got track of young Dennison."

Gladys paled, and Dave's hand shook.

Continued Post: "We found out that he was at Falcon, the station above Deanville, playing cards all night Saturday, and half of Sunday. He was as drunk as a lord, and half out of his head part of the time. I sent a man to get him last night, but he was gone."

Winslow groaned, and the tears trickled down Gladys' cheeks. "Wilton is at camp now, Mr. Post," she sobbed. "He will not resist arrest, I'm certain, if it is necessary."

"Only need him for a witness, as far as I know yet," said Post.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INQUEST

A LARGE crowd of vacationers had gathered under the redwoods near the Dennison camp. As Coroner Post had been accompanied to Deanwood Park by several of his own townspeople, he had no difficulty in selecting a jury.

At two o'clock he was ready to commence proceedings. The word he had brought to camp had proved to be a veritable bombshell. This absolute contradiction of Wilton's story threw Dave Winslow completely off his balance. "Why couldn't he have told the whole truth, Gladys?" he asked. "He ought to have known that we would stand by him."

Long benches had been drawn up in rows, and the spectators and witnesses occupied these. The coroner sat in a camp chair behind a kitchen table, on which were the blood-stained book, the scarf, the deck of cards, the stained kitchen knife, the bottle of white ink, and the drawing-pen found in Clark Hanson's pocket. The jury sat on benches to the right of the coroner.

A tall man sat on one of the rearmost benches, his keen eyes taking in every detail of the tableau. Bolton, the camp choreman and waiter, at meal hours at the Camp restaurant, sat not far from this tall stranger. If there was anything out of the way doing, Bolton was sure to be on hand. He was big, not very bright; but there was something in the murder mystery that fascinated him.

"I'll call on Mr. George Sumner first," announced the coroner, clearing his throat.

George rose. Obviously he did not like to testify. He seemed to sense that all the evidence he could give would be bound to injure Wilton Dennison, than whom it is doubtful if he had a better friend in camp. He cast Wilton a glance of mute apology, but young Dennison paid him no heed.

"Now, Mr. Sumner," said Post, "the preliminaries over, will you tell us when and where you last saw Clark Hanson alive?"

"That's sort of a hard question, Mr. Coroner," George replied uncertainly. "The last time I actually saw him alive was in Deanville, Saturday night, around eight o'clock. He ran into me on purpose, and I shoved him into the gutter. Then I went on my way."

"That was positively the last time you saw him?" asked Post.

"That was the last time I actually saw him—yes. But on my row home down the river, he nearly ran me down with his motor boat. Of course it was pretty dark, and I didn't see him distinctly, but he called out, evidently knowing that it was me, and I recognized his voice."

"I see," nodded Post, biting off a piece of chewing tobacco and shoving it under his tongue. "And what did he say when he hailed you, Mr. Sumner?"

"I don't know as I can give you his exact words, but it was to the effect that he'd missed me that time, but that he'd get me yet."

"Do you know what he referred to?"

"I think so." George was becoming more at his ease now. "I think he referred to the fall I gave him when I shoved him into the gutter. He was half-drunk then, and vowed at the time to get me later. But I didn't pay any attention to his threats."

"And that was the last you saw of him—when he passed you on the river?"

George hesitated. "Yes. Well—that is—I don't suppose I could say I actually saw him again in the flesh. All I saw was his silhouette first, then his shadow."

"How did you know it was his silhouette and shadow?" asked Post, nervously wiping his forehead with a handkerchief.

"I'd know his profile among a thousand. The nose is queerly shaped, as you know yourself. Besides, there was his boat at the shore line. He must have just climbed the bank to the Dennison camp."

"But could you see the nose in shadow, at the distance you were from camp?"

"Distinctly. There was a bright light inside, and the shadows were very clear-cut."

"Tell the jury all you saw Saturday night, from the time the Dennison tent came in sight from your boat."

George launched lucidly into the story. He came to the point where he had observed Hanson's skulking figure stoop to peer into the tent. Here Mr. Post interrupted him. "Can you point out just about where he crouched?" he asked.

"Easily," said Sumner, and led the way around to the river side of the tent-site. "Here's about the place," he pointed out to the crowd that had followed him. "Sure enough. Here's a small hole. It must be the one he looked through."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Post. "And where was Mr. Dennison—that is, the other figure you said you saw rocking and reading?"

"He must have been just diagonally across," said George. "You see, the lamp was on the table at the opposite side of the tent, so any one on the river could easily see the shadows cast by those inside."

"I see."

They returned to their benches.

Without interruption Sumner continued his story to the end, it differing in no essential from the account he had recited at the pavilion Saturday evening. He hesitated in places, deeply moved, no doubt, but on the whole he impressed the jury favorably.

"Mr. Sumner, can you identify this copy of 'Treasure Island'?" asked the coroner.

"I only saw the shadow of the book in the hands of the man who was rocking," he said slowly.

"That's so. Could you identify the man rocking?"

"I only saw his shadow"—a trifle uneasily.

"In profile?"

"Ye-es."

"Did not the profile bear a resemblance to that of any one you know?"

"Is it imperative that I answer that question?"

"It would be best."

George looked appealingly to Wilton, but the latter affected not to see him. He sat looking down at his feet, and seemed unconcerned at what was going on about him. Then Sumner glanced across at another bench, where sat Gladys and Dave Winslow. He caught her eye, and she nodded her head sadly. George turned to the coroner.

"The man rocking in the chair bore a close resemblance—in profile—to—to Wilton Dennison," he finished.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Post. Then, turning to his jury: "You have heard what Mr. Sumner said?"

George Sumner, thinking he was done, started for his seat, but Post called him back.

"A few more questions," he said simply.

"Ask them," replied George laconically.

"To return to this book"—the coroner held it up in plain sight—"did you see it when you entered the tent?"

"No. It must have already fallen under the table. We didn't find it until we returned from the dancing pavilion with the lanterns."

"And this knife—can you identify it?"

"I believe it is the one Mr. Winslow picked up in the underbrush when we were searching for Wilton Saturday night."

"I see. And these cards. They were on the box near the table when you came first to the tent?"

"Yes. All except a few scattered on the floor."

Next, Mr. Post held up the silk scarf. "Do you recognize this, Mr. Sumner?"

"I believe I do."

"To whom does it belong?"

"I have seen one very similar to it in the possession of Mr. Winslow."

At sight of the scarf Gladys turned deathly pale. She looked inquiringly into Dave's face, but he did not offer to enlighten her. His countenance was a study.

The coroner picked up the bottle of white ink.

"Have you ever seen this before, Mr. Sumner?"

"I saw it in the tent on the box."

"When you first went inside?"

"Yes."

"I don't think of any more questions at present. You are excused, Mr. Sumner."

George made straight for where the dejected young Dennison sat. "I had to tell the truth, Wilton," he said in a low voice.

"I know you did, George, old boy. But I can't for the life of me see what caused the shadows you saw. Nothing like that happened when I was in the tent."

George could only shrug his shoulders. He had seen the shadow drama with his own eyes. And he believed what he saw.

Post next called Dave Winslow to the stand.

Dave was perceptibly nervous and his eyes kept shifting about the faces before him. But when they encountered those of an individual sitting well back, he stiffened, and a new confidence seemed to come to him.

He was asked the usual questions—when he had last seen Clark Hanson; if he could identify the various bits of evidence. At last came the ticklish topic: the purple silk scarf with the initials D. W.

"You recognize this scarf, Mr. Winslow?" asked Post.

"Yes"—simply. "It is mine."

"When did you see it last before the tragedy?"

"At the beach Saturday afternoon."

"You're sure you haven't seen it since?"

"Not until it was found in the hut across the river."

"Mr. Winslow, can you account for every minute of your time between eight o'clock Saturday evening and the time when news of the tragedy came?"

Winslow's cheeks blanched. His eyes wandered.

"I—I——" he hesitated. "I—Yes, I believe I can account for all of my time. You see, I was with the others at the pavilion. The dance began a little after eight."

"Pardon me, Mr. Winslow, but I have heard it whispered that you left the pavilion at about half-past eight and were gone some time. Is that correct?"

"Yes," answered Dave, almost in a whisper, nothing but Wilton's welfare in his mind. "But I was not alone. Miss Dennison accompanied me on a little stroll." He looked appealingly toward Gladys.

She was obviously troubled, and Dave imagined he knew what was on her mind.

"I see," said Mr. Post. "That will do for the present, but I may call on you again."

Dave Winslow, feeling very uncomfortable, returned to his seat beside Gladys. But he was not beside her long, for she was the next one the coroner called to the stand.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A NEW VOICE

THE throng of campers that occupied the benches were all on edge. Already the evidence had been conflicting and the coroner was visibly puzzled.

As soon as Gladys left his side, Dave Winslow rose and made his way over to where her brother sat. He tapped Wilton lightly on the shoulder, and young Dennison looked up.

"What's the matter, Dave?" he asked dully.

"For God's sake, Wilton, don't spring that story you told us in the tent last night. Post has been looking you up. He knows that you weren't asleep in the motor boat as you said. He knows all about your seance with cards and booze at Falcon."

"Lord!" gasped Wilton, as his head sank into his hands. "I only told that so as not to hurt mother and Gladys too much. I was a blamed fool. But thanks, old man." He raised his head a moment, then lowered it again. He was attracting attention, but seemed not to care.

As Dave returned to his seat and caught sight of Gladys' troubled face, "She might as well tell it all," he mused. "It's bound to come out anyway. She mustn't perjure herself." It wasn't himself he feared for, but the fact becoming known that Wilton had borrowed the scarf from him. It would only make things that much worse for the young man whose sister he loved.

"Miss Dennison," Post began, "do you recognize this bottle of white ink?"

"No," she replied calmly as she could. "I never saw it until it was found on the box in our tent."

"Then it didn't belong to your brother?"

"I'm certain that it didn't. What use would he have with it?"

"That's the question that's been perplexing me," admitted Post. "What use has any one for a bottle of white ink? Do you recognize this scarf, Miss Dennison?"

"Ye-es," she answered faintly.

"When did you see it last?"

"I—I don't remember."

"Try to, Miss Dennison. It may be of great importance in our investigation."

"I cannot recall just when I saw it last. Dave—I mean Mr. Winslow," she flushed slightly, "has worn it on several occasions, but I do not remember the last time I saw him with it around his neck," she finished with firmness.

"Is it true that you accompanied Mr. Winslow on his little promenade at eight-thirty Saturday evening?"

"It is." She was growing uneasy. She cast a glance of appeal to Dave, who had been eagerly awaiting just this opportunity. He nodded slowly in the affirmative, and she was positive he wanted her to tell all she knew. She was grateful to him for this, even though she didn't divine what would ensue.

"You were with Mr. Winslow all the time he was absent from the dancing pavilion," pursued Mr. Post relentlessly.

"I was with him near—nearly all the time," she faltered hopelessly. She wondered what the coroner was trying to bring out.

"Ah! Then he was out of your sight for a time?" said Post, with a slight suggestion of triumph.

"Yes, sir." She cast her eyes downward.

"How did he happen to leave you?"

"He—he said he wanted to go get his muffler," she blurted almost without knowing what she was saying.

"Aha! His muffler! Did he refer to this purple silk scarf?"

"Yes. I—I believe so." She glanced toward Dave in mute consternation, but once more he signaled for her to tell all.

"Mmm," muttered the coroner. "How long was he gone?"

"I—only a few minutes."

"How many?"

"I—really I don't know. He couldn't find the scarf, and when he gave up the search he returned."

"Can't you make an approximate estimate at how long he was gone?"

"It—it wasn't over ten or fifteen minutes at the most," she said feebly.

"I'll ask you only one more question, Miss Dennison," said Post, noticing that she was rapidly losing control of herself. "Are you sure he wasn't away less than ten minutes nor more than fifteen?"

"I—I can't be positive. But it seemed to me to be between ten and fifteen minutes."

"You are excused, Miss Dennison. Pardon me if I have

hurt your feelings in any way. But it's up to me to get at the truth of this matter. Mr. Winslow, will you please take the stand again?"

Miss Dennison walked slowly to her seat and Dave Winslow arose, gave her a gentle little pat on the arm, whispered in her ear: "Good little girl," and walked to the stand.

Just then Wilton Dennison, who had been listening closely to his sister's testimony, jumped to his feet, wild-eyed.

"Mr. Coroner," he shouted, "I don't care if I'm out of order or not. But I object to your calling Dave Winslow to the stand again. I know why he kept silent about the scarf. He did it to shield me. I'll tell you all I know about that scarf. I'll——"

But George Sumner's brawny hand was over his mouth and he was forced back to his seat.

Mrs. Dennison nearly swooned at this violent outbreak on the part of her son, but Gladys and Mrs. Winslow, who was sitting near, soon had her calmed. They wanted to take her to the tent, but she would not consent.

"Young man," said the coroner angrily to Wilton Dennison, "you'll have all the opportunity you want to do your talking a little later. For the present I intend to address my questions to Mr. Winslow."

He rolled his quid into his left cheek, wiped his brow with his handkerchief, and turned to Dave, who faced him a bit defiantly.

"Fire away with your questions, Mr. Coroner," he said with the utmost coolness.

"Mr. Winslow," said the ruffled Post, attempting to keep his temper in submission, "you gave me to understand that you were in Miss Dennison's company all the time you were absent from the pavilion. Can you offer an explanation?"

"I told the truth in all I said," replied Dave nonchalantly. "But for reasons which are none of your business I did not care to say that I left her a few minutes."

"Eh, what's that! Then you do admit that you left her alone for a few minutes?"

"Certainly. I did not see the need to mention it before, but since you found it out, I don't mind."

"How long were you out of her sight?"

"That I don't know exactly. Perhaps fifteen minutes. I think Miss Dennison's estimate was a reliable one."

"You told her that you were going to find your scarf?"

"I did."

"Did you find it?"

"I did not."

"Was that the real reason for your leaving her?"

"Of course it was," said Winslow angrily. "Do you think I am lying to you?"

Mr. Post's mind seemed to possess peculiar qualities. He did not pursue one line of inquiry long, but was continually flying off at a tangent. He paid no attention to Dave's resentful question.

"Mr. Winslow," he asked suddenly, "how long would it take you to walk rapidly to the Dennison camp from the spot where you left Miss Dennison?"

But Dave followed the trend of the coroner's reasoning. "I imagine I could make it in two or three minutes," he said with a smile. "Why?" he asked, a trace of sarcasm in his voice.

"How speedily can you row across the river?"

"Three minutes easily—at that point," replied Dave without an instant's hesitation.

"How do you know what point I am referring to?" demanded the coroner, who was now thoroughly aroused.

Dave grinned, but he did not reply at once.

"How did you know?" repeated Post.

"Oh, I have sense enough to see what you are driving at, Mr. Coroner," he laughed.

"Do you hear what Mr. Winslow says?" asked Post, turning to his jury, who wisely shook their heads in unison and shifted their quids mechanically. A bright-looking jury they were—twelve of Deanville's finest!

"Then you could row back again in three minutes, I presume," went on the ruffled coroner.

"Certainly," assented Dave, who was beginning to thoroughly enjoy himself.

"And you could get back to where Miss Dennison waited in another three or four minutes?"

"I could."

"Let me see," recapitulated Mr. Post. "Three minutes to go, three minutes to cross the river, three to return to this side, and three more to rejoin Miss Dennison. Do you see the significance of that, Mr. Winslow?" and he turned a triumphant eye on his faithful jury, who nodded vigorously whenever he gave them the cue.

Mr. Winslow "got" the significance, but it worried him not a whit. Instead it made him grin broadly.

"That makes twelve minutes," he pointed out. "Now that only leaves me three minutes to kill Hanson and make away with his body. Of course, if I could run down the bank with his body and spring up to the little board shack on the other side of the river, meanwhile putting him out of his misery—— But say! What's the use? It's ludicrous!" And he burst out laughing.

"You may be laughing out of the other side of your mouth," said the coroner gravely, "before you're done. You must understand that by your own admissions you have put yourself in a very precarious position. That's all I have to say to you for the present. You are excused, Mr. Winslow," and he accorded him an exaggerated bow.

Although Dave had taken his quizzing light-heartedly, it was different with some of the others. It was easy to detect the fear that lurked in Gladys' eyes. Her brother, too, had not favored Dave's second examination, and he showed it in his pugnacious bearing.

Charles Knapp was next called upon to testify, and then little Carl Granger, the boy who had discovered the body in the shack, and who had later found the scarf that was causing so much disturbance. Both answered the routine questions, but nothing of importance was forthcoming.

The coroner wiped his brow a third time. A ray of sunshine was burning into the nape of his neck, and he shifted his chair.

"Mr. Wilton Dennison will next take the stand!" he barked, and everybody craned his neck to see the better.

CHAPTER NINE

FURTHER TESTIMONY

WILTON DENNISON was not a good witness, and the jury was at once prejudiced against him. His manner was too antagonistic for his sullen answers to bear much weight. When he took the stand he determined to stick to the truth, as the drowning man will to a straw, for he readily realized that he was "in bad."

"Mr. Dennison," began the coroner, biting his lip maliciously, "what was the occasion of your last meeting with the decedent? Think before you answer, and be sure you tell the truth."

Wilton grew white with the anger that surged up within him, but he decided to hold his peace for the present at least.

"I saw him at camp here a little after eight o'clock Saturday evening."

"You invited him here?"

"I did. We intended to play cards."

"Did Hanson spring at you when he arrived?"

"He did not."

"You are certain?"

"Of course I am!"

"You have played cards with him on other occasions?"

"Yes."

"For money?"

"For money." Wilton shifted his gaze, for he had caught sight of his mother looking at him.

"Who won the most as a general rule?"

"Hanson did," a little surlily.

"Did he win much?"

"Considerable, but I don't care to name the amount here."

"I can't compel you to. Now tell us what happened when Hanson arrived."

"I don't much like to make a public confession," stammered Dennison, "but it appears that I'll have to in order to save myself. Occasionally I drink.""

"Yes?"

"When Hanson came to camp Saturday evening his breath reeked with alcohol, and that only made me crave the stuff myself."

"Go on."

"He said he had not even brought a flask along, but he told me that if I wanted a drink so bad, I might take his motor boat and go up to town and bring some back with me."

"Why didn't he go with you?"

"I don't know. He said that he had a headache, but that if he rested until I returned he'd be better and able to play cards."

"I see. So you went alone?"

"I went to the boat—yes. But when I got out on the river and found out how cool and exhilarating the air was I decided to take a little longer ride."

"You did?"

"Yes. I knew Clark wouldn't object. But it was dark and when I got a ways above Deanville I ran in under some overhanging branches and couldn't get the boat free of them."

Here Dave Winslow, who had been listening attentively, breathed a sigh of relief, for he knew that Wilton had decided to adhere to the truth. Gladys, too, showed relief, but her mother looked at her askance. Gladys only smiled back at her.

"What did you do next?" asked Post.

"With considerable difficulty I scrambled ashore and made my way to Falcon, about a half mile away, I should judge. There I took a few drinks and began playing cards. I guess I must have taken too much for I stayed there playing until Sunday noon. Then I took the first train back for camp."

"Very, very ingenious," commented the coroner. "And the motor boat—what became of it?"

"It's still under those overhanging branches, so far as I know," replied Wilton. "I never once thought of it again."

"And that is a full and truthful account of everything you did Saturday night?"

"It is."

Mr. Post held up the bottle of white ink.

"Have you ever seen this before, Mr. Dennison?" he asked, as if he thought young Dennison knew all about it.

"No. I've never laid eyes on it before. You needn't ask me what it's for, because I don't know."

"Very well. If you are telling the truth I suppose we may take it for granted that it belonged to Hanson. But have you ever seen this?" He held up the drawing pen.

"Never."

"Do you recognize this knife?"

"It looks like those we use on the table in camp. I can't positively identify it."

"You can offer no explanation of how it came to be halfway between here and the river?"

"No."

"Do you recognize this book?" He picked up the gruesome copy of "Treasure Island."

Wilton Dennison started and turned pale as the coroner opened it to pages sixty-two and sixty-three.

"Yes," he said barely audibly. "I was reading that book when Hanson arrived. It belongs to me. But the blood—how did it come there?" He had been told about the book, but sudden sight of it seemed to stun him.

"You were reading this book, eh? How far had you read? This far?"

"I turned down the corner of the page where I left off," said Wilton simply. Then he shuddered as he observed that the corner of page sixty-two was turned down as he had described.

"You were reading here?"

Wilton could only nod dumbly.

"That looks bad for you, boy," said Post, softening a little for the first time.

"But the blood! I don't know anything about it," cried Wilton. "I haven't the slightest idea how it came there. I swear it!"

"There, there, Dennison. Cool down. I have more questions to ask you."

Wilton tried his best; the result was not very satisfying.

"These cards—have you ever seen them before?" asked Post.

"It's my own deck."

"Were some of them scattered over the floor when you left Hanson alone?"

"No. I'm certain they couldn't have been."

"What makes you certain?"

"Because they were in the drawer of the table you are sitting at. We hadn't gotten them out when I left."

"You're sure?"

"Positive. We weren't going to play until I returned from Deanville."

"Did Hanson know where you kept the cards? Couldn't he have taken them out?"

"I imagine he knew where I kept them. He might have wanted to play solitaire. I can't say that he didn't take them out."

"And you left the lamp burning when you went away?"

"Yes."

Post picked up the purple scarf and turned it about in his hand. "Mr. Dennison," he said, "a little while ago you volunteered to give us some information concerning this scarf. I told you you would have your chance to talk later. You may do so now."

Wilton braced himself, and catching the eye of Dave Winslow, he made his decision. "I know it will count against me," he began.

"Eh, what!" ejaculated the coroner, who had been watching the young man's face like a hawk.

"But I'm going to say it anyway," Wilton spoke determinedly. "If I don't you will have the wrong impression about Dave Winslow. Saturday afternoon at the beach I was a little chilly when I dressed. I took the scarf from Dave's pocket, but he was talking to some one else and I doubt if he even noticed it. I forgot to return it."

Post turned to his jury. "Do you hear what Mr. Denni-

son just said? You know where the scarf was found. If there is no question, I will ask you gentlemen to arrive at a speedy verdict. You are excused, Mr. Dennison."

"I have a question!" came in full, rich tones from a tall man of thirty-eight or forty, the one who had sat on a rear bench throughout the proceedings. "I have a question—several of them." He rose and strode rapidly toward where the coroner sat.

Dave Winslow felt a little thrill pass through his frame, as the tall interrupter walked past where he and Gladys sat.

CHAPTER TEN

MR. ROBERT BUCHANAN

DAVE turned to Gladys, who was watching his face curiously. "Can you keep a secret, Gladys?" he asked lightly, almost frivolously.

She was surprised. "What is it, Dave?"

"Do you see that man talking to the coroner?"

"Yes. But——"

"Have you any idea who he is?"

"No. Have you?"

"I should say so! I sent for him last night."

"You sent for him?"

"Yes. He's one of the cleverest detectives on the Pacific Coast. His name isn't known much outside of Oakland police headquarters, but——"

"What is his name, Dave?"

"Robert Buchanan. And if there is any one on earth who can help Wilton he is the man."

She leaned toward him in mute gratitude.

"But don't mention to a soul that you know who or what he is. He cautioned me in an answer to my wire. I know that Wilton is innocent. I feel it. And Bob Buchanan will prove it!"

"But, Dave, what do you think that horrid old jury is going to decide. I just know they are prejudiced against Wilton. Their faces show it."

"Don't let that worry you, girlie. It may take a little time, but Bob Buchanan will turn the tables. You wait and see."

The detective was talking earnestly with Post, the coroner, who continually bobbed his head up and down and sidewise, seeming to agree with some things Buchanan said, and to disagree with others. Finally Post turned to his jury and asked if they had made a finding.

They had—that Hanson had met his death at the hands of Wilton Dennison.

A constable had taken Wilton, aghast, into custody as soon as the verdict was returned. The young man seemed to have expected it, however, and took it all in dumb stupidity.

"Just a minute, Mr. Post," said Buchanan, in his clear voice. "I want to take those prints." He walked to where he had been sitting and returned with a camera. He opened the copy of "Treasure Island" to pages sixty-two and sixty-three. Next he straightened back the creased-over corner of page sixty-two, and closed the book again. He opened it again, this time at pages sixty and sixty-one. The coroner held the book while Buchanan sprayed a powdered preparation on the corner of page sixty-one. Almost instantly a fairly clear finger print became visible.

He photographed the print, taking a second exposure to be on the safe side. "Now, Mr. Coroner, you can take the book along," he smiled.

Dave and Gladys could not help wondering what he was getting at. But he offered no explanations. In fact, up to now he had not once glanced in their direction. For all the others knew, he might be a total stranger.

He picked up the bottle of white ink. "Hm!" he muttered and placed it back on the table. Next he took up several of the cards. He turned them back upwards and selected two of them. Mr. Post held them against a sheet of white paper, and Buchanan took a photograph of them side by side.

"Now, Mr. Post," he said, "I am much obliged to you for your courtesy, and with your permission I will ask Mr. Dennison two questions."

"Go ahead," said Post good-naturedly. He was smoking one of Buchanan's fine little cigars.

"Mr. Dennison," said Buchanan, "what game were you and Hanson accustomed to play?"

"Cooncan," answered the puzzled Wilton.

"Buchanan's specialty is card-sharking," Dave whispered to Miss Dennison. "He gathers the evidence for most of the gambling joint raids in Oakland."

She nodded puzzledly. Such information was out of her province.

"And now, Mr. Dennison," Buchanan continued, "for one more little point. "Did Mr. Hanson, when he entered your tent that evening, trip or stumble over anything?"

"Why, come to think of it, he did," replied Dennison. "Yes; he stumbled over a little footstool sitting in the middle of the floor. He was half drunk and didn't see it, I guess. But why do you ask?"

"I merely wanted to be certain," smiled Buchanan. "And, now, youngster, keep a stiff upper lip. If things turn out as I anticipate, you'll be back here with the rest of the folks before long." He leaned over and whispered a few words to Dennison, and the rising star of hope was at once evident in the young man's eyes.

They allowed Wilton a moment or two with his mother and sister, then, as it was nearly train time, they took him away. Mrs. Dennison took it all with remarkable quiet, and Gladys was obviously buoyed by the hope the magnetic Buchanan had inspired.

The gathering dispersed, and soon none were left but Mrs. Dennison, Gladys, Dave Winslow and Bob Buchanan, and introductions were at once in order.

"How good it was of you to come, Mr. Buchanan," Gladys said impulsively.

"Oh, I needed the rest," he returned. "I have hired accommodations already. Nothing could be better than a day or two on the river. How's the swimming?"

"Great," said Dave.

"That's good. I'll go in to-morrow morning, after I've taken what finger prints I want."

"Finger prints? Whose do you mean?"

"Yours for one, Winslow," the detective replied, "and several others. I've formulated a little theory, and I want to see if the facts don't bear me out."

"I suppose it's terribly secret?" ventured Gladys.

"Yes, indeed," he smiled. "But you'll know about it by to-morrow."

"And you can't tell us now?"

"That might spoil everything."

Next morning Dave was up bright and early, but not ahead of Buchanan. The detective was waiting near the Winslow camp for a little talk with Dave.

"This morning," he said, "I want to take the finger prints I spoke about last night. I want you to round up the fellows for me."

"I'll do that. Who do you want?"

"Yourself, and Charlie Knapp, and George Sumner for a third, and Miss Dennison for a fourth and her mother for a fifth."

"But why the ladies?" asked the astonished Dave.

"Make a family affair of it just for fun," laughed Buchanan. "They'll enjoy it, and it will help take their minds off the other matter, I think."

A little later the crowd collected at Buchanan's camp. Here the detective took black impressions of all their fingers. No one objected, and they got a lot of fun out of it. Gladys mischievously blacked Dave's face before they were through.

When they were through, "I rowed to Deanville last night," Buchanan informed them, "and there, besides attending to other things, I took Wilton's finger prints. Here they are."

He took from a pocket a card similar to those on which the impressions of their own fingers had been placed. "I have numbered each card on the back, so I'll know whose fingers each stands for. I'll mix them up, see?"

He next took from his pocket a photographic print—that of the corner of page sixty-one of Wilton's copy of "Treasure Island."

"It is my opinion," said Buchanan, "that the print taken from the bent corner of "Treasure Island" will correspond with one of these we have before us. It will probably be that of one of the thumbs. We'll look them over and see if we can't arrive at a decision. Has any one an objection to raise?"

He scrutinized all their faces closely.

No one objected, and inside of ten minutes they had unanimously decided that the card bearing the number "1" on its back was the one whose thumb-print corresponded with that in the photograph of the corner of the book's page.

Buchanan unearthed a small card on which he had written a series of numbers, with names opposite. He handed it to Gladys Dennison.

"Will you please tell us what name stands opposite number one on the card?" he asked with a smile.

"Oh!" She was startled as she looked down at the card. She was puzzled at what Buchanan was getting at, and the name she found disturbed her. "Number one is Wilton—my brother," she said slowly. "Mr. Buchanan, what does that mean?"

"Ease your mind, my girl," he replied quietly. "It proves quite conclusively to me that your brother told the truth, and that he had nothing whatever to do with the death of Clark Hanson. Alone, it might prove nothing to others. But with a few additional facts I have, why, there's nothing to it!"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A SURPRISE

"OH, GOOD!" cried Gladys. "Tell us how you draw that conclusion, won't you, please, Mr. Buchanan?"

"Not just yet," smiled the detective. "It might thwart my other plans."

"What other plans?"

Again Buchanan smiled. "I can't very well answer that either—just yet. I have yet to prove that some one else killed Clark Hanson. I know your brother didn't, but I haven't yet got my hand on the person who did. When I do my case will be complete—to-day, I hope."

And with that she had to be satisfied.

A little later: "What do you say if we all go down to the river for a swim?" asked Buchanan.

Dave imagined the detective had some good reason for making the request, so he at once assented for the entire crowd. Some of them at first protested, but Buchanan overcame all their objections, and they set out for their bathing suits.

At half-past ten they were all gathered on the beach. Dave Winslow could not help conjuring up a picture of nearly the same faces on the afternoon before the tragedy. Only two of them were missing now—Hanson and Wilton Dennison. But he quickly brushed the thought aside.

Buchanan was the first one into the water. He was of splendid physique, and his swimming called forth much praise from the rest of the crowd.

"How far is it to that little neck of land on the other side?" the detective asked, pointing to a point about a quarter of a mile above.

"Farther than you can swim and return from," joshed Dave.

For punishment Buchanan ducked him.

"Why, I could swim there faster than you could row it," he said.

"Yes you could!" chaffed the crowd.

Sumner was turning somersaults in the water and creating a veritable tidal wave with his ponderous body.

"Well, here goes!" said Buchanan suddenly, and he dove beneath the surface.

"By heck! I believe he's going to swim it!" said George, pausing to watch the detective reappear.

When next they saw his head he was twenty yards away, headed directly for the point of land he had inquired about.

"It isn't so terribly far, is it, Dave?" asked Gladys, paddling over nearer him.

"No. Not very. He's just doing it for the exercise, I suppose. He'll turn back before he gets that far, though."

But Buchanan did not turn back. Each minute saw him gaining on his goal. His head and shoulders were barely visible now.

"Now he's there!" exclaimed some one, and all eyes were focused on the projecting bit of land.

Buchanan was just getting out of the water. He gave an elaborate wave of his arm to let them know of his safe arrival, then disappeared among the dense shrubbery with which the shore was lined. They caught one more glimpse of his white bathing trunks among the bushes, then lost sight of him.

"Where can he be going?" asked Dave Winslow, half aloud.

Gladys heard him and whispered in his ear: "Isn't that in the vicinity of the old board shack? Isn't it just about opposite our camp? It seems to me it is."

"By Jove, you're right, Gladys! But what can he be doing there?"

"Maybe he is looking for a clue. Possibly he thinks the coroner may have overlooked something."

"Maybe so. You never can tell what Bob Buchanan will do. He gets a notion into his head, and he has no rest until he has accomplished his task."

"He's such a likable man, isn't he, Dave?"

"He's one swell fellow, all right! But there he is again."

Once more Buchanan waved his hand to the little group of bathers. They waved back and watched to see what his next move would be.

Poising himself neatly, he took a header into the river, and they didn't see him for nearly a minute. When they did he was scrambling back onto the bank.

"What on earth can he be doing?" they asked one another in surprise. For they were aware of the fact that the water was not very deep in that locality.

"Oh, he's just doing it for the fun of it," vouchsafed Charlie Knapp.

"I don't know," Dave muttered to Gladys Dennison. "There is probably a method in his madness.

Buchanan waved and took another dive. In a minute he was climbing the bank again. He immediately took a third plunge, but this time, when he reappeared, he was heading directly for them.

But if they expected any explanation of his antics when he returned, they were to be disappointed, temporarily, at least. When within twenty yards of them he disappeared beneath the surface, only to appear in their very midst.

"Now who says I couldn't make it?" he asked in mock triumph. "Why, I could swim three times that distance and never know it. I'm an old hand at the game."

"Where did you go when you were ashore?" one of the more inquisitive ones asked.

"For a short stroll," he replied. "But if you want to know, I don't suppose it will do any harm to tell you. I went to the old shack, but I found nothing interesting there. But I did elsewhere."

"Mr. Buchanan," asked Gladys as they waded to shore, "why did you dive so many times?"

"Just for fun," laughed the detective. "I never saw such an inquisitive little girl."

She blushed and fled to her dressing-room in the bathhouse.

"Well," anounced Buchanan, half an hour later, as they walked up the bank and past the dancing pavilion, "the second part of my problem has been solved." They were almost to the Park restaurant. The detective halted. "What if we all have lunch in here? It's on me."

They readily agreed to the plan.

They gathered around the lunch counter, for there were no tables, and enjoyed themselves with the best the camp could afford. Bolton, the man-of-everything, served their orders in a preoccupied manner.

"And for desert," suggested Buchanan, when the main meal was disposed of, "what do you say to ice-cream?"

"They don't have any here," volunteered George Sumner, evidently recalling his mission to Deanville the night of the tragedy.

"They don't?" queried the detective in surprise.

"No," they all corroborated Sumner.

"That's a great note." Buchanan scratched his head. "We'll have to content ourselves with pie, I suppose."

Dinner over, "I don't know as you've thought of it, folks," said Buchanan, "but didn't you send Sumner for ice-cream Saturday night?"

"Yes," they chorused. "But——"

"Why, I forgot all about it," said one—"me, too!" another.

"What became of it. Do you know, Sumner?"

"Why, no. It was on the boat—on the stern seat when——"

"When," broke in Buchanan dramatically, "you ran your boat ashore on the other side in your haste to dispose of Hanson's body. The freezer went overboard. I dove and found it less than an hour ago!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

GEORGE SUMNER staggered back to his seat. A most peculiar expression came into his eyes. He searched the room and encountered the morbid gaze of Bolton, the waiter. He hesitated, then: "I—I didn't mean to kill him. I didn't mean to! He forced me to! It was in self-defense!"

For a second an unreadable look appeared in the detective's eyes. Then he spoke. "Don't get unduly excited," he advised calmly. "I examined the body in Deanville last night, and from the direction of the stabs I took it that the knife was probably held in Hanson's own hand. I couldn't be positive, though."

"It was. It was!" cried Sumner, as though grasping at a straw.

"He must have attacked you, and you must have twisted his hand under and forced it back against him to protect yourself."

"Yes, that's just what I did." But Sumner's gaze wavered.

The others were aghast at what they heard. To think that George Sumner—of all men——

Bolton, the waiter, a queer look in his face, stepped closer as Buchanan said: "I shan't force you to tell your story, Sumner. I think I can reconstruct it, in nearly every detail. You can correct any errors or omissions."

Sumner seemed willing.

"I shall begin at the time when I first became acquainted with the facts of the case," said Buchanan. "That was at the inquest. Winslow telegraphed me that it was to be held at two in the afternoon, and I decided to be present and acquire as thorough a knowledge as possible. Too, I wanted to study the faces of the witnesses.

"Let us consider Sumner's account of his trip to Deanville Saturday night. We all know of his encounter with Hanson there, and of the latter's dirty attempt to run him down with his motor boat—and, by the way, the *White Rabbit* has been found just where Mr. Dennison said it would be. Naturally Sumner would not have been left in a very friendly state of mind toward Hanson.

"When he neared camp he saw the shadow of Wilton Dennison reading, and as the time he saw him falls in with Wilton's version, I think we may believe most of Sumner's story so far. In fact, he stuck pretty close to the truth—up to a certain point.

"Sumner says he saw the form of Hanson skulking outside the tent, and no doubt he did. Hanson was half drunk and was liable to do most anything. Next Sumner says he saw Hanson enter the tent and spring at Wilton Dennison. He only stated what he thought to be the truth. Wilton says Hanson tripped when he came in, and, in shadow, this would have looked much as though he had sprung forward. At that moment Sumner's boat ran ashore and his attention was diverted elsewhere. When he looked up he saw no one in the tent.

"Now let us return to the tent and consider what was taking place there while Sumner righted his boat. When Wilton heard Hanson he turned, and not wishing to read further, he turned down the corner of the page he was reading, and laid the book aside, open, on the table. He admitted that much to me in Deanville last night. He also left a distinct thumb print on the creased corner.

"And to me that thumb print could prove only one thing—that there was no hostility between Dennison and Hanson when the latter arrived. If there had been do you imagine Wilton would have paused and deliberately marked his place and laid the book aside? He would have dropped it like a hot shot and leaped to his feet to protect himself if Hanson's attitude had been threatening. Any normal man would have. Too, consider the blood stains in the book. They covered pages sixty-two and sixty-three, with the exception of the space under the turned-down

corner of page sixty-one. This only adds proof that the corner was turned down before blood was shed."

His fascinated listeners leaned on his every word. And Bolton, in his morbid way, was as interested as any of them.

"That convinced me that Wilton wasn't guilty," continued Buchanan. "And another fact helped—Wilton's build. How could so small a man have carried Hanson, who weighed at least a hundred and sixty, down to the river and up to the hut on the other side? Preposterous. I decided I must look elsewhere. One man in camp whose build and strength warranted my attention was George Sumner.

"But he was the one who first brought news of the tragedy. His story held fairly well together, and at first I could find no flaw in it. But when I came to the white ink, the drawing pen and the cards, it was different. Through them a hint of a motive might be found. Wilton identified the cards as his own. What did that mean? But I'll come to that in a moment.

"We left Sumner getting out of his boat. He saw no shadows in the tent, and heard some one running through the brush—really Dennison on his way to the motor boat. George, who believed he had witnessed part of a tragedy in shadow, and thought it might be Hanson dragging Wilton down the bank, rushed toward the noise, but did not arrive in time to see who got into the *White Rabbit*. He turned and looked again up at the tent, and here a lie comes in.

"No doubt he had a purpose in telling it, and if you had watched his face while Coroner Post questioned him you would have seen that there was something faulty about his story at this point. He didn't want to injure Wilton, yet—— Well, folks, the tent was not empty this time—was it, George?"

Sumner hesitated, then nodded in agreement with Buchanan.

"I knew it," said the detective. "Hanson, who had accompanied Wilton a few steps outside, had returned. When Sumner had climbed the hill and peered into the tent, he saw Hanson leaning over a box, just as his shadow had proclaimed from below. Am I right, Sumner?"

Again George nodded, his face a study in conflicting emotions. "Yes," he said, "and he was——"

"I know what he was doing," put in the detective. "He had let Wilton take his boat because he wished to be alone a while in the Dennison tent. He wanted to have time to mark the backs of Wilton's cards. The white ink suggested that to me at once, and by comparing the photographs I took of two of the cards, I detected where he had blocked out certain portions of the design on the back with his white ink. It's an old game.

"And George, peering in through the hole he found so readily for the coroner, caught Hanson in the very act. Naturally he was hopping mad. He sprang into the tent, no doubt intending to give Hanson a thorough trouncing.

"Hanson, however, must have heard him coming. Recognizing Sumner, his wrath must have grown uncontrollable. He was in a fury, and seeing a table knife handy, he seized it and sprang at Sumner, who naturally had to defend himself."

Buchanan paused a moment, looking into the faces of his auditors. Then, a most peculiar look in his own face, he proceeded: "The deed done, Sumner was terrified. His first thought was of flight. Then he remembered the deserted cabin across the river. Seeing the silk scarf lying near he used it to keep the blood off himself, and seizing the body he lifted it as he would a sack of grain and, without waiting to clean up any of the mess, descended the slope to his boat. He evidently hadn't noticed that the copy of "Treasure Island," receiving its quota of stains, fell to the floor in the struggle.

"In his haste, the boat struck the bank on the other side with sufficient force to topple the ice cream freezer into the water. Sumner's boat's bow has an irregular gouge in it, and I saw the mark it made in the packed sand on the other side when I took my swim this morning. I had already learned, by discreet inquiry, that he had not crossed the river in it since the tragedy. I had wondered about nothing being said concerning the missing ice cream freezer, and on my second dive this morning I found it. Now, Sumner, have I been fairly correct?"

The big fellow's eyes wavered. "Absolutely," he said in a low voice. "But it was in self-defense and——"

"It's no use, George!" Buchanan startled them. "It never pays to lie to shield the other man. First you shielded Wilton, and now you are even willing to take the thing onto your own shoulders to hide the guilt of your——" He amazed them by suddenly turning to the man leaning over the lunch counter. "Bolton, tell us what you know about it," he said calmly.

Bolton was a sight. His entire bearing gave him away. He spoke bitterly. "I did kill Clark Hanson. He'd have got George if I hadn't. I was watching from the other side of the tent and saw him marking the cards. He'd trimmed me more than once, and when he jumped George with the knife I'm not sorry that I jumped in and killed him."

Buchanan smiled. "My little farcical account of the affair was to bring about this man's confession," he said. "That's why I staged it here in the restaurant. I passed them in the dark on the river last night, and heard some interesting talk. As I said before, Sumner, it doesn't pay to sacrifice yourself—even to save your brother."

"Brother!" cried Dave Winslow in astonishment.

"Yes," replied Buchanan. "I gathered that much in the overheard conversation. Even at the inquest I surmised it, for I recognized Bolton as an alias for Frisco Sumner, who had served time at San Quentin. Probably George's reason for camping here was to visit his brother."

"Then George——"

"George Sumner was in a quandary, after Hanson's death. He didn't know what to do. He wanted to shield Wilton and his brother both. That explains the tale he concocted for you at the pavilion, where he went while his brother, who is even huskier than himself, carried the body across the river. But in the end George fell into my trap and confessed to the deed in his brother's presence."

"And Wilton," Gladys asked—"will he——"

"I heard the train pull in three or four minutes ago," laughed Buchanan. "Wilton has been stopping overnight at a hotel in Deanville. They didn't hold him after I told what I knew. But we didn't want him here until we'd got the straight of this. It might have made certain parties suspicious and balked my plans. If I'm not mistaken that's Wilton's step now." And, as young Dennison and another man entered, "Here, Burke, is the man you want." The detective indicated the brother of George Sumner with his thumb. "Self-defense, of course. Light sentence if any at all."

And that evening, before Dave Winslow left the Dennison camp, the ring on Gladys' finger verified one camp rumor.

Our next number is going to contain a baffling detective mystery in its feature story. Be sure to read this interesting narrative.

THE LOVE INDICATOR

-BY ORLEY E. GRAY

PERCIVAL PENNINGTON had several prospective brides-to-be.

Not that Percy was a potential polygamist; far from it. Be it said to his credit that he had never seriously contemplated marrying more than one of them. But which one? That was the question which haunted Percy's dreams and put thoughtful little wrinkles between his eyes during his waking hours. Not that it made a great deal of difference to him; he loved them all—individually and collectively—and felt that he could be exceedingly happy with any of them.

But then, he wanted to do the right thing by the girls, and finally decided that the only fair thing was to marry the one that loved him most. He used the word most because, since there were many smaller things in the world than Percival Pennington's opinion of himself, it did not occur to him that some of them might not love him at all.

The problem now became a question of ascertaining which of the lovelorn girls esteemed him most highly. Clearly he could not ask them, for each, from the depths of her own heart, would affirm that it were she.

Percy had not been keeping steady company with all three of the girls nor with any one of them. He had known them all from childhood and had, as a friend and old acquaintance, escorted first one and then another to various shows, balls, and parties, as the occasion seemed to require. The very impartialness of the friendship which he had maintained made it harder for him to approach a decision upon the matter in hand.

After losing much sleep without thinking of anything which would assist him in making the all-important discovery, he decided to lay the matter before his scientific friend, Robert Thinkington, who had on other occasions helped him out of affairs which, while not of so much importance as the present problem, were quite beyond the powers of Percy to straighten out. Robert Thinkington had become a scientist of the most hopeless sort, a man who spent most of his time in his highly equipped laboratory, perfecting wonderful inventions, trying out doctrine-shattering experiments, or reducing some seemingly irreducible problem to a mere formula of figures and symbols. Beyond any doubt, he could treat Pennington's problem as an equation in three unknowns and get the desired answer.

So it came that Percy was shown into the Thinkington laboratory, where he found his friend busily trying to persuade a pink solution to turn blue. Though why he preferred blue to pink as a color for that particular solution was a question which no amount of explanation would have made clear to Percy.

Thinkington wiped his hands upon his apron and greeted his guest warmly.

"I'm truly glad to see you, Percy, old boy; I was just wishing that some one would turn up to carry me away to some quiet little restaurant this evening and make me forget all about this knolly little problem, which has baffled me for a week, so that I might come back with a clearer brain to-morrow and solve it. You are just the man, for if anybody can make me forget my studies, you are the chap."

"But this time I don't want you to forget them," Percy declared. "I have a little problem of my own which I want you to help me solve."

"Better and better!" Thinkington cried. "There's nothing that makes me forget an old problem so quickly as a new one. Let's have the theorem."

Whereupon Percy stated minutely and in detail the problem of the three brides-to-be and his decision about the matter.

"Well, old man, your problem is solved as you state it. You have already obtained the right answer. Marry the girl that loves you most."

"But, you bloomin' imbecile, that's the problem; that's why I came to you. I can't tell which of them really loves me most."

"And there's no denying your good judgment in coming to Thinkington, the great scientist. A-hem! My most esteemed sir, you came to exactly the right place. I shall be delighted to permit you to be the first to use a delicate little instrument which I have just invented. I am convinced of its merits and have just been wondering whether there is a practical use for it or not. Your request seems to prove that there is, for if you need it, there is every reason to believe that, in this broad land of ours, there are others in like condition."

Thinkington stepped over to a large cabinet, unlocked a drawer, and carefully drew out what appeared to be a small artificial rose.

"This, my dear Percy, is a little instrument which I call the 'Love Indicator.' I don't claim much credit for the invention, as it is based upon the principle of wireless telegraphy. I first ascertained that love and hatred (with all their variants) emanate from human beings in currents resembling the positive-negative currents of electricity. After which it was a relatively easy matter to contrive this little device for measuring the strength of those currents. I camouflaged the instrument with an artificial rose so that it might be worn in public without any one suspecting its true nature. The wearer can, by a glance at this little transparent dial, ascertain exactly the state of feeling (with regard to himself) of any one with whom he comes in contact. There is no chance of getting a message belonging to some one else, for the current only travels between the persons harboring the emotion and the cause of the emotion. Thus the wearer may be assured that he is the object of all emotions registered on the dial. This little plate which I just removed from the back of the rose is the receiver of the current.

"You will notice that the pointer now stands at a point on the dial marked neutral. When you are in the company of a person who neither likes nor dislikes you, the pointer will remain at neutral. Varying from the neutral on the positive side, you see the degrees marked sympathy, friendliness, warm regard, love, and so on, to intense love; on the negative side you see the degrees of antipathy, envy, dislike, and so on, to intense hatred. You may rest assured that the position of the pointer on this dial will indicate correctly the amount of love which either of these

girls bear for you, if you read the dial while in her company.

"With this instrument it should be the work of but a few minutes to gather the data which you desire without any one suspecting what you are doing."

Percy put the indicator into his pocket with a sigh of satisfaction.

"All right, Bob," he said, "I'll give it a complete tryout at the Hendron party to-morrow night, and, since you say that it will surely work, I bind myself to abide by its decision. And now let's look up that little restaurant of which you spoke and forget our troubles for the time being."

All the next day Percy thought earnestly of the coming test and the effect which it would have upon four lives. He tried to imagine what each of the girls would do in case she were one of the ones unchosen. Quiet little Gwenn Norris, he imagined, would be an old maid or a Red Cross nurse, for she had always seemed rather cold and undemonstrative and apparently disinterested in men in general; Isabel McLay, he was inclined to think, would marry that tall, rangy Frank Upton if she could not get Percival Pennington; Upton was not an ideal man by any means, but then, if Isabel wanted him, it was none of Percy's business; Marian Smith, he supposed, would marry that idiot of a Schlanckster, who had kept hanging around all the time.

The more he thought of this last contingency the more restless and uneasy he became. Not that he thought more of Marian than the others, he told himself, but Schlanckster was such an unutterable, pig-headed, German fool that he just couldn't bear the thought of sensible little Marian tying up with him; and that James Elroy who had danced with her twice the other night, while different, was equally impossible. He would give much, he told himself, if Marian had a really decent chap—like himself—to fall back upon in case the indicator decided against her.

Percy was among the latest arrivals at the Hendrons that night, so he paid his respects to the hostess and hurried away to fill his programme.

Just as he came up to the group in which Gwenn Norris was standing, the music for the first dance started.

"I am not engaged for this dance either," Gwenn was telling a young lady friend," so, if you would like, we shall go into the conservatory."

"I beg pardon, Miss Norris," Percy butted in, "but I was just coming to claim this dance."

"All right," she laughed, "I had planned to give four people one dance each, and you are one of the lucky four. I have such a dreadful headache when I dance too much that I resolved to not overdo the thing to-night."

"That may be better for you, but it is undoubtedly hard on some of the rest of us," Percy said as they stepped out upon the floor.

After they had been dancing for a few minutes, he stole a look at the little indicator, and found that it was standing firmly on neutral. Evidently he meant no more in Gwenn's life than the family physician or any of the old friends whom she had known all her life and come to regard as old acquaintances.

Well, he wasn't so much surprised when he came to think of it, neither did it seem to bother him particularly, beyond hurting his vanity a little.

They chatted pleasantly for a few moments after the dance and then he went in search of Isabel.

He found her trying to think of some way in which to render Frank Upton desperately jealous (a fact which Percy had no means of knowing), so she readily consented to give him the next dance, although, as she showed him, it was reserved on the programme for Mr. Upton.

Upton hurried to them just as Percy was leading her out on the floor.

"What does this mean?" he demanded of her angrily. "Didn't I have this dance reserved?"

"Oh," she told him sweetly, "you were having such a splendid time talking to Lily Marsdel that I really supposed you had forgotten all about me."

"Now the hot-headed fool will not speak to you for a fortnight," Percy laughed as they whirled away.

Isabel did not answer, and from the expression on her face, Percy thought she must be angry. He was just starting to say something by way of apology when he happened to think of his indicator and looked at it instead.

The pointer was standing around close to the limit on very intense love.

So Isabel loved him intensely. It did not surprise him greatly that such was the case, yet he was not nearly so elated at the certainty as he should have been. Well, he would wait until he had seen Marian before he proposed or did anything to indicate that he suspected the state of Isabel's feelings. Maybe Marian would send the pointer over that infinitesimal fraction of an inch which it had lacked of reaching the farthest positive pole.

He managed to obtain the sixth dance with Marian, and, as they glided away in a dreamy waltz, he felt that they were in perfect harmony and wondered if the mutual current of affection between them would not be entirely too much for the indicator.

The dance was half through before he could steal a glance at the instrument, because he had spent all the time gazing into a pair of earnest blue eyes which looked trustfully back into his own.

Suddenly he missed step, stumbled, recovered, and almost collapsed upon the floor.

"What is the matter?" Marian asked in a frightened voice. "Are you ill?"

"A sudden attack," Percy murmured as they left the floor. "If you will excuse me, Miss Smith, I believe I shall go home at once."

"Oh, Mr. Pennington," she exclaimed in tones of genuine concern, "I'm so sorry. Do call me up in the morning and let me know how you are."

He mumbled some sort of promise and staggered from the room.

"Clear around against the intense hatred post," he moaned as the taxi whirled him homeward. "I can hardly believe it."

Thoughts of the love which Isabel bore him brought no comfort, for now he knew that he was going to break that silly pledge to marry the one who loved him most; he knew that there had never been three prospective brides-to-be, but only one—Marian. Marian—the name hurt like a knife thrust. And to think that he had never realized how he felt about the matter until the indicator had shown him that he had no hope.

Next morning Percy walked mournfully into the laboratory of Robert Thinkington, and laid the 'Love Indicator' upon his desk.

"For heaven's sake, old man!" Thinkington exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"I only want to ask one question," Percy moaned. "Is that indicator infallible?"

"Absolutely," Thinkington replied, picking it up and examining it as he spoke.

"Then I am the most miserable man on earth," Percy said. "I have discovered that I really love only one of those girls, and, according to the indicator, she absolutely

loathes me. The only one that loves me, I couldn't think of——"

"Jumping Jasper, man!" Thinkington interrupted him excitedly. "When we put that receiver back, we got it turned around, so that it registers by contraries. The only thing which registers correctly is neutral. The girl that registered love really hates you, and the girl that registered intense hatred is madly in love with you. Go ask her, and she will tell you that I am speaking the truth."

And, one hour later, she blushingly did.

(The appeal of this theme lies in its oddity rather than its probability. But it is interesting, and interest, after all, is the greatest virtue in any story.—Editor.)

SEEK MASTODON SKELETON

THE Spokane Museum has leased the 160-acrs Coplan ranch near Rosalia, Wash., and within a short time will begin "prospecting" for the complete skeleton of one of the largest mastodons ever unearthed. Parts of the skeleton have been located. Porter Brothers, local contractors, have been engaged to do the excavation work, and are awaiting favorable weather.

The farm, which has a low, soggy place, has been the source of several mastodon bones unearthed in past years. There are several more skeletons hogged in the place, it is believed, and the one the Spokane Museum hopes to recover complete will stand 14 feet high, with tusks extending about 10 feet from the jaws. This will equal in size the largest mastodon ever unearthed, which was found on the same farm in 1878 and now is on exhibition at the Academy of Science in Chicago.

THE NATURAL BRIDGE

"THE history of the Natural Bridge is remarkably interesting. It was mentioned first, I think, by Burnaby in 1759, who spoke of it as a 'natural arch or bridge joining two high mountains, with a considerable river underneath.' A bloody Indian fight occurred near it about 1770. Washington, when a surveyor for Lord Fairfax, visited it and carved his name, where it can now be seen. During the Revolution the French organized two expeditions to visit it. From their measurements and diagrams a picture was made in Paris, which for nearly half a century was copied in Europe and America as correct. The original tract was granted by the king to Thomas Jefferson in 1774. After Jefferson became President he visited the place, surveyed it and made the map with his own hands. The next year he returned, taking two slaves, 'Patrick Henry' and his wife. For these two the former President kept open for the entertainment of strangers. The slaves were never manumitted. Jefferson left here a large book for 'sentiments.' Unfortunately the book was accidentally destroyed in 1845 and only a part of it remains. Above the bridge is an immense glen, probably once a cave, which extends for a mile to Lace Water Falls. There is much to see in this glen—a saltpetre cave, worked for niter during the war of 1812 and by the Confederates in 1862, and Lost River, a subterranean stream which shoots out of a cavern high in the wall, and disappears in another nearly opposite. Above the arch some one has carved, 'Whoever drinks here shall return.' Natural Bridge Park is a plateau 1,500 feet above the sea and comprises 2,000 acres."

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, by L. Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, By Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, By Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34 AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
35 THE CLUE IN THE BOX, by Alexander Douglas
36 TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, By Rene Renaud
37 A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38 THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox

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THE GENTLEMAN'S BLUFF

By GEORGE A. BARNES

WHEN the dead body of Professor Smith, professional gambler, was brought home, Mrs. Smith was convalescing after a severe attack of fever. Her husband's demise was not entirely unexpected, for since he had forsaken his legitimate business of small lawyer to follow the oil developments in Western Pennsylvania during the early 60's, and knowing his natural proclivities for cheating, she had waited with dread for the end she felt was inevitable. Fleeing from one mushroom town to another, as his character was discovered, he at length reached Tight Pinch, where a driller named Jackson objected to his showing four kings in his hand, when the king of clubs had been dealt to himself. On pointing out this little peculiarity to Smith he was called a ——— ——— mud-digger, sons of various unmentionable characters, and, lastly, a ——— ——— liar. While he might have pleaded guilty to some of these charges, Jackson objected to having his veracity questioned, and drawing his pistol responded so vigorously that Smith was soon in a land where jack-pots and extra hands cannot follow.

In the turbulent life of the little oil town the event was soon forgotten. But interest in the case was revived by the arrival of the constable from Red Hot, who, in the absence of the proper official in either town, agreed to act in the dual rôle of coroner and judge—he having previously exercised his constabulary authority, and locked Jackson in the tank-house that served as jail.

The jury being duly impaneled, the prisoner was put on trial, not exactly for his life, but to prove that the provocation had been sufficient to warrant his decisive action. His defence was, as previously stated, that while a certain card had been dealt to and retained by him, when their hands were shown, Smith had a full complement of cards of that denomination. Words had followed, and he shot Smith, not because he objected to being beaten, but because "he didn't allow no man to call him a liar." According to the unsolicited testimony of several of the spectators, it was no uncommon thing for Smith to have cards that had been dealt to some other person, and it was a pity that Gentleman Hillard had not shot him when he attempted the same game in Pithole. After the jury, and part of the spectators had testified to the chronic dishonesty of their late townsman, the coroner and judge protempore expressed the opinion that he had received no more than his deserts, and instructed the jury to render a verdict in accordance with the testimony.

As the jury, like the allegorical wedding-guests, had other engagements, they rendered an undelayed and unanimous verdict of "not guilty," and in company with the judge, the prisoner, and most of the spectators, immediately adjourned to the Little Red Jug saloon, where they drank the health of the late defendant, and discussed the murder and trial minutely.

When Mrs. Smith had settled all the numerous bills left by her late husband, she found she had a little over $500 in cash, his personal effects, ten poker decks, and last, but most important, a fatherless boy, Thomas Jefferson Smith. After taking an inventory of her resources, she found herself forced to decide upon a means of support for herself and boy, for she felt that she could not become a dependent upon her relations; and she turned from the thought of the doubtful welcome she would receive from them, and the comfortless life she would lead, to the contemplation of the life of a gambler, which, to her adventurous spirit, seemed infinitely more preferable. Of her success as a poker player she had no doubt. In the halcyon days of their early married life her husband had taught her the game that so fascinated him; and the touch of the cards as she looked over his effects brought back to her the memory of the many happy evenings spent together, when he had initiated her into the mysteries of poker and several milder games. He had often found it impossible to hold his own against her, and many times had complimented her upon her proficiency. Now she would put her skill to the test, and see whether his praise was deserved.

She looked over his clothes. They were but little worn, and one suit was almost new, for he had been very fastidious about his dress, and if he had been playing in any luck at all, never wore a suit after it began to get shabby. She was an expert seamstress, and by letting out a seam here, and taking one in there, and judiciously padding where the curves in her form showed too plainly, she made the suit fit almost as well as though it had been tailor made. When she had invested in all the accessories of a gentleman's dress—all purchased "for her husband"—and completed her work by the addition of a false mustache, nobody would have recognized her in the handsome, slim young man, shy and rather given to starting at the tirades of profanity some drunken driller or tool-dresser indulged in at the capricious turns of fortune. In fact, this nervousness and his unsophisticated manner soon won for him the sobriquet of "The Boy." Her hair had been closely cut during her illness, but had grown out, and now formed a thick mass of brown, which a visit to a barber transformed into a very becoming crown for the boyish face beneath. A few finishing touches completed her costume, and she was ready to go forth as John Bantling, professional gambler, and woo the fickle goddess for the support of herself and son. And, indeed, when she had arrayed herself in her new costume, and, standing before the large pier-glass before which her husband had always dressed, surveyed the young man she was to impersonate, she was entirely satisfied with the result of her labors, and eager for the night to come that she might make her début into the gambling circles of Tight Pinch.

The town had grown rapidly in the few months that had elapsed since Smith's death, and long lines of irregular streets stood where fields and underbrush held undisputed possession a few months before. The gas lights were beginning to throw their yellow glare on the hurrying masses in these streets, when, as Mr. John Bantling, she left her room at Mrs. Smith's, where she said she boarded, and walked slowly down one of the main streets of the town, humming a tune in a rich voice, that in a woman would have been called contralto. A few squares below the Eagle House she entered a saloon, and went up to the bar.

"Well, what is it this evening, Mr. Bantling?" asked the bartender affably.

"Nothing, thank you," she replied. "Your goods and my

business don't go well together, you know. Has Mr. Hillard been here to-night?"

"Yes, he's upstairs, and said to send you up if you came."

"All right, Mr. Boyer; thank you," and, passing to the back of the saloon, she ascended to the second story, where, going along a narrow hall, she knocked on one of the dozen or more little doors opening on both sides of the passage. A voice from within told her to enter, which she did, and found herself in a room about ten feet square. At a baize-covered table in the centre of the room sat a man whose whole appearance, to one acquainted with the class then in the oil fields, bespoke the professional gambler. This was "Gentleman" Hillard.

"You are a little late this evening, Mr. Bantling," he said, in a voice remarkable for its evenness of accent, and courtliness of tone.

"Yes, I had a little business to attend to before I came." She did not add, however, that this business was getting Jeff to bed and asleep; for that amiable young gentleman had stubbornly refused to retire, but kept his mother busy telling stories that failed to sooth, and had only succumbed after decisive action on her part.

"Well, we will proceed to business at once," said Mr. Hillard, and producing a deck of cards the two were soon deep in the mysteries of the American game.

When the widow had appeared in Tight Pinch, some five or six months before, and seemingly engaged rooms and board from Mrs. Smith, she played poker with whoever cared to play, going nightly to some one of the public gambling rooms in the city. On one of these trips she met "The Gentleman." She had often heard of him, and once an admirer poured into her ears an exciting and highly colored account of the time he had almost shot one "Professor" Smith for cheating. One evening, as she sat playing with another gambler, a tall, handsome man entered the room, and was immediately surrounded by a crowd, eager to speak to him and shake his hand. Inquiring who the newcomer was, she learned that it was Gentleman Hillard, the most fortunate, as well as notorious gambler in the oil regions. She could not keep her eyes off the man, and was glad when the crowd carried him to that part of the room behind her chair; for "The Gentleman" evidently found something interesting about her, and more than once "The Boy," looking up from her cards, found herself the focus for a pair of piercing eyes.

For some reason she could not play that night, and whenever there was an extra heavy stake she lost. The appearance of "The Gentleman" behind her opponent's chair did not increase her playing powers, and when he came around and looked at her hand, "The Boy" felt a nervous desire to fling her cards on the table and cry. In her nervousness she dropped a card—a dark ten-spot—and "The Gentleman" picked it up and handed it to her. But somehow in the transaction the card was transformed and became a king of diamonds, giving her a straight flush, and taking the pot. At the same time her opponent moved uneasily in his chair, and after the hands were shown mumbled something about another engagement, and sneaked from the room.

"The Boy" turned to "The Gentleman," and asked, almost angrily, "Why did you change that card, Mr. Hillard?"

"Well, I thought it was almost time for you to crook him a little," was the calm answer. "He's been stuffing his hand right along to-night."

"You mean——"

"That you've been cheated, sonny. He's that kind; I've known him for years."

While "The Boy" did not like to be cheated, neither did she like to cheat, but the justice of "The Gentleman's" act struck her, and she held out her hand. "Mr. Hillard, I'm obliged to you. My name is Bantling, and I hope we may be friends."

"I'm pleased to know you, Mr. Bantling," said "The Gentleman." "And now that your friend has left, why can't we have a little game?"

"Certainly," and they were soon busily engaged.

"The Gentleman" evidently liked to play with "The Boy," for it was not long before two or three nights out of every week saw them together in a private room at Boyer's, playing alone, and without spectators; for early in her career in Tight Pinch "The Boy" had objected to playing among a crowd of men who watched every movement, looked at the cards in each player's hand, and speculated on what they might make by drawing. This made her nervous, and she insisted upon playing, as much as possible, in a room where inquisitive eyes could not see the contents of her hands, nor the jack-pots she raked in. The rest of the men laughed at this little piece of eccentricity, but "The Gentleman," while he never won a game from "The Boy," had been a gambler for years, and could understand how little things affect a man's nerve; and he even acknowledged that he could play better himself when there were no spectators. But the change did not seem to improve his ability, or else "The Boy's" improved proportionally, for the games played behind closed doors were no more fortunate for the older man than those played among the crowd.

Only once did "The Boy" lose to "The Gentleman." It was a night in the late fall, soon after she had insisted on playing away from the public rooms. A heavy rain had been falling all day, and as night came on the storm increased. "The Boy" and "The Gentleman" sat in their usual room at Boyer's. Considerable money had already changed hands, although it was not yet midnight, and the pile of chips before Bantling showed which had been the most successful.

Suddenly there was the sound of somebody hurrying up the stairs, and the quick squish-squish of little wet shoes along the passage, and a voice choked with sobs crying, "Mamma! mamma! I want you! Where's my mamma?"

At the sound "The Boy," her face flushed, half rose from her chair, and then sank back again. She did not seem aware that "The Gentleman" had raised her, and was waiting, watching her narrowly meanwhile—but sat and listened while the little feet carried the childish searcher the length of the passage and back, and his tearful cries echoed through the rooms. Not until his voice had died away down the stairs did either of the two speak, and then "The Gentleman" said: "Some little fellow hunting for his mother! Queer place to come to. Wonder how he got past old Boyer? He generally keeps a close watch for any one who don't belong here. Makes a man feel kind of blue, though, don't it? It's your play, Mr. Bantling."

"The Boy" made her bets mechanically after that, and allowed the pots to fall, game after game, into her adversary's hands, until her winnings and all the money she had with her were gone. Then, excusing herself on the plea of not being well, she left the place and hurried away.

For several nights she was absent from her usual haunts; then she suddenly reappeared, and resumed her almost uninterrupted career of success. Shortly after this Mrs. Smith moved away, and she went to live at the Eagle House.

A year went by, and in the unstable developments of the oil regions Tight Pinch began to lose some of its eminence, and sink into the dead-alive condition of a deserted boom town. But its prosperity had been longer lived than was

usual, and the uneasy spirits who form the principal population of new oil towns welcomed its impending desolation as a valid excuse for forsaking their whilom stamping-ground, and seeking fresher and more exciting scenes.

But the two gamblers still stayed. Boyer's was no longer the place it had been, and the exciting games that were played there in former days had become memories to be resurrected and told to chance newcomers, or discussed by the inhabitants who were either too poor or too lazy to leave the town. The two men were the only regular customers of the once well-patronized house, and almost nightly met across the baize-covered table they had come to look upon almost as their own. "The Gentleman's" luck was no better than formerly, but he seemed willing to play as long as he had anything to play with.

One night they sat facing each other as usual. The handsome face of "The Gentleman" was as impassive as ever, but "The Boy" looked troubled, and played nervously. Her luck had forsaken her, and as game after game was played the winnings of "The Gentleman" increased.

"Your luck has left you, Mr. Bantling," he said.

"Yes, rather," "The Boy" answered. "But this run can't last much longer, and I'll stay with you as long as I can."

They silently scaled down their hands, and then "The Gentleman," after studying his hand for a few moments, pushed forward his entire stock of chips, and asked, "Will you cover those?" "The Boy" nervously put in her remaining chips, and drawing a wallet from an inner pocket, took off a couple of fifties and laid them on the table. "The Gentleman" promptly covered and raised them with a double amount from a similar pocketbook, and was raised in turn. In a few minutes "The Boy" threw her cards on the table. A straight flush! "The Gentleman" covered the last raise, and spread his cards in a semi-circle before him. Four kings and a ten-spot!

"The Boy" rose from her chair. "Mr. Hillard, will you kindly wait here while I go to my room? That is all the money I have with me."

"Play right ahead, Mr. Bantling, if you wish. If you lose, you can pay me to-morrow."

"No, I'd rather have the money by me as I play. And perhaps I'll find my luck if I go out."

When she was gone "The Gentleman" lit a cigar, and leaning back in his chair, said under his breath, "Plucky little devil, too!" And then he smoked contemplatively until Bantling returned.

It soon became evident that she had not found her luck, for the succeeding games were like those that had preceded them, and finally she threw up her last hand and looked across at Hillard. "Well, that's all," she said, as calmly as though it were twenty cents, instead of as many thousands of dollars that had changed hands that night, for the bets had been heavy. "But I guess it was nearly all yours once; so you are only getting back your own."

"The Gentleman" picked up the cards and handed them to her. "Shuffle!" he said.

"What for?"

"Shuffle, and I'll show you," and his voice never changed.

"The Boy" did so mechanically, and "The Gentleman" dealt. Then he pushed his winnings into the centre of the table, where they made a little mountain of green, with a sprinkling of silver, and said: "I'll stake all that against this—Mrs. Smith," and he touched the white hand which covered "The Boy's" cards with his finger tips.

The hand was drawn back quickly, and "The Boy" looked at him in a startled manner; but his eyes alone expressed anything more than the gambler's interest habitual with him. "The Boy" showed her nerve, however, for she picked up her cards and began to play as if nothing more unusual than the inexpressive chips were at stake.

In silence they alternately discarded and drew. At length "The Gentleman" threw down his cards, and said: "I'll call you, Alice!" and without waiting to see her hand stepped around the table and caught her in his arms.

When she could push his lips away long enough to speak, she asked: "But, Mr. Hillard, how did you know?"

"I've always suspected it, dear, and that night Jeff came here crying for you, I knew. But why are you so blue to-night, sweetheart?"

"Oh, I'm so homesick for Jeff."

"Where is the little fellow?" I haven't seen him since that night; and we used to be quite friendly, you know."

"I had to send him away after he came here for me; I was afraid he would interrupt me in the middle of a game some night, and give the whole thing away."

"Well, we'll go to him to-morrow," Hillard said as he turned to the table. Her cards were lying face up, as she had dropped them. Four aces and a queen!

We have another fascinating poker story in preparation for our next issue, entitled "Three Partners and Three Games." Watch for it!

RIDDLE OF THE "HEAD OF GOLD"

STRANGER than fiction is the story of Annibale Tosci, once a beggar, who gained a fortune by solving the riddle which for fifty years had puzzled all of Italy. About a century ago there lived in Naples a wealthy but eccentric Frenchman, who erected in a busy street near the Monastery of San Vito a plain, unlettered marble shaft surmounted by a bust of himself. He died, and in his will it was provided that these words should be inscribed upon the monument:

"On the 1st of May each year I have a head of gold."

Intense curiosity was aroused, and when May Day came around the street about the shaft was thronged. Some of the superstitious watched until dusk, believing that a miracle would come to pass and the head be changed to gold. Nothing happened, but for fifty years each 1st of May found the street filled with curious onlookers. Excavations showed that nothing was concealed beneath the foundation, and tests proved that the mounment was marble throughout. Finally it was agreed that the inscription was a bit of sardonic humor, and only a few made the annual pilgrimage.

Then Annibale Tosci, the ragged beggar, found the solution of the mystery, and became famous in a day. He had observed that a long shadow was cast by the monument, and armed with a pick he went at sunrise on the next May Day to the famous street. Carefully marking the spot where the shadow of the head fell, he began to dig. Only a foot beneath the surface he found a rotting bag filled with gold.

Statements vary as to its amount, but it is known to have been a large sum, and Tosci was permitted to keep the greater part of it. Casting aside his shiftless habits, he became an industrious and wealthy farmer and landlord. When he died, several years ago, a large estate was divided among his heirs. The shaft has been removed, for the inscription is no longer true.

THE FLORIO WALK-UPS

By KATHERINE STAGG.

THERE is more of mystery, and oftentimes tragedy in the small walk-up flats of a great city than any other place on earth. This is easily understood if one stops to think how secretive a life can be lived in them. The larger flats which sport colored help are poor hiding places, for the genus hall-boy is a most rapacious, nosy, and pestiferous animal.

The Florio Flats are on one of the cross streets above Central Park. Too small for families, they are occupied mostly by experimental couples, or odds and ends of single humanity.

Ferne La Rue was the most important half of one of these experimental couples. Twenty years in age, one hundred and twenty in worldly wisdom. Pretty, and real blonde, the radiant kind, she made other blondes look shop worn, which you will admit is some asset these days. Gowned beautifully, she was occasionally seen in the cabarets, but not often, for Ferne was too wise to wish to be well known.

She and Friend Husband rose at noon, took a leisurely breakfast, and spent the afternoons at some matinee or possibly a ball game in the season, and nearly always together; but promptly at six o'clock they separated, for the evening was Ferne's business hours. And Ferne's business in life at the present time was reforming Cousin William. If, sometimes, the reforming part of it looked tolerably discouraging, she at least took very good care of him during the hours they spent together. Cousin William was the son of one of our best known men, but the booze and drug habits had both had their way with him, and he needed much care. Now Ferne was capable in many ways.

She could iron a petticoat to dainty perfection, cook an omelette like a chef, play poker like Honest John, and buy hats like a professional buyer. She could keep a secret, too, and Cousin William had yet to learn of Friend Husband's existence, although he had held that incumbency for nearly a year. Ferne never missed phoning Cousin William exactly at six p. m., and was always ready to spend the evening in any manner of amusement that cousin decreed. So you see, her life was rather complicated, after all, and could not possibly have been carried on successfully in a more pretentious place. Cousin William could never reconcile her simple taste for a home with her extravagant taste in jewelry.

One day Ferne peeped cautiously out of her door at the sound of a rather heavy step in a narrow hallway that she shared with her opposite neighbor, who had just moved in.

The dwellers of the Florio Flats were a migratory lot of birds, and one never knew much about each other. Neighbors might be either an advantage or a risk.

"Good-morning," piped Ferne, with an appraising eye on her new neighbor.

"Why, good land! I didn't know anybody spoke to you in New York. Good-morning, child."

Marcia Perkins beamed, but her quizzical look was quite as appraising as Ferne's had been. The great dramatist Destiny had cast her little play with due thought to contrast as a surety, for Marcia was as absolutely a product of the country as Ferne was urban to her satin slippers. "I know people always think one ought not speak to strangers here, but I like friendly faces about, and as long as we are sure to meet often in the hall, I think it much nicer to pass the time of day," said Ferne. This sounded cordial, and most things we say have two or more reasons back of them.

"Right you are, and I'm glad you feel that way; I've never lived in a flat before, and I'd take it kindly if you'd show me a couple of things," remarked Marcia. Nothing loath, Ferne crossed the little hall, and in half an hour had gleaned Marcia's story. A widow of fifty odd from the north part of New Hampshire, she had come to the city to see about some business interests left her by a brother, recently dead; and, as she felt sure she would be poisoned if she ate in any restaurants, she had taken this small flat, furnished, for the period of her stay.

All the native New England shrewdness was hers, but she took summer boarders in season, and many hunting parties found their way to her breezy old farm, so some of the narrowness of her bringing up had been rubbed off by this wider contact.

Ferne let fall just enough explanation about her own ménage to make it seem more plausible than it really was, but Marcia was taking in too many new impressions to question the situation.

A month went by, and the neighbors were on terms of aloof friendliness that is so thoroughly New Yorkese. Ferne dined and motored or theatered with Cousin William every night, conveyed him safely home in limousine or taxicab, and then stopped for Friend Husband at his usual haunt, rounding up at the flat around midnight. Marcia was usually asleep long before that time, so matters might have gone on for a much longer period if the front partition between the two little parlors had been more substantial.

Odd bits of talk sometimes floated across the thin boards, but Marcia paid little attention, being minded to keep her own counsel. During the first week in April, she was awakened one night by a violent toothache, which became so unbearable that she dressed herself, and sought an all-night drug store for some laudanum. It was quite a step in her city education to venture out at that hour. She had applied the remedy, undressed again, and put out the gas; then she looked out of the window before fixing the shades, in her usual careful manner. The big arc light in front fell on a stopping taxi, and Ferne stepped out, but a very different Ferne of the morning, with its domestic atmosphere of coffee and bacon and eggs. This was the midnight version of the fair Ferne; rouged and slightly rumpled, still seeming to sway with the languor of dancing, for this had been a cabaret night.

But the thing that was most startling was the hard glittering blaze of her eyes. To consciously eavesdrop would have inexpressibly shocked Marcia, but some power she could not withstand kept her in the little front room, as she waited for the couple to come into their own flat. No light words could possibly come from that mask of a face. As still as death, she stood and waited. Sure enough, a strangled gasp was the first sound that pene-

trated the thin wall ,then Ed La Rue said to her sharply: "Hush, girl, I tell you, it is the only way; don't weaken now."

"But, Ed, suppose he dies?"

"I've tried to suppose about everything, and made plans accordingly." This very grimly.

"Isn't there some other way? I never meant to lure him into a trap."

"I know it's hard on you, kid, but, on my own side, I'm about filled up with this funny idea of a party you've been running. It's got to be this bird or me, from now on—get that?"

"If anything slips up——"

"Look here, I never saw you lose your nerve before, and I've seen you put over some pretty good things, too."

"But, Ed, nothing like this."

"Well, one bold play, and Easy Street for me. The rest of the game seems a better crack than chasing the end of the rainbow a block at a time as I've been doing. I've caught you and him cold, and I'm going to be the gainer by it."

Ferne was crying in a shuddering, queer way that was half hysterical, and Ed brought a small green bottle from a cellaret in the second room. Pouring a glass of the liquor, he said firmly:

"Here, drink this; it's absinthe, the best thing in the world for a bracer. No, girl, you've simply got to pull yourself together. You'll be safe as heaven, maybe safer, if you only keep composed."

Their voices sank lower as the swish of silken garments showed they were getting ready for slumber, if slumber were possible to two people engaged in such a mysterious undertaking.

Marcia pulled herself together with a start; she had forgotten good scruples entirely in her breathless interest in the tense words she overheard.

How true it is that one emotion will actually kill consciousness of another, if the one be more powerful!

She had almost forgotten her toothache, and now looked about for some means of quieting her own nerves. Marcia was a most proper, even straitlaced, individual, but her hunting friends had taught her one vice. And that was on occasion to smoke real honest-to-goodness cigarettes. She had been too modest to indulge in this habit among strangers, poor soul, for, like many females whose autumn atmosphere are their best protection, she dared not do anything indiscreet for fear her iron virtue might be suspected. It was not so much the words she had heard as the sinister manner of the speakers that had impressed her so deeply. The case called for the dearly loved cigarette, but how to get one at that time of night. Then Marcia suddenly remembered that she had noticed a glass case of cigars in the drug store. With a sense of being wildly adventurous by this time, she once more dressed herself, and sought the shop where she made her purchase, telling the clerk, with what she considered justifiable mendacity, that "Father was laid up with rheumatism, and he liked his cigarettes mild."

Then she hurried back, donned dressing-gown and slippers in quite a real bachelor manner, and proceeded to enjoy her smoke, hoping it would not penetrate too strongly next-door.

The next day, Marcia went down early in the afternoon to the offices of the Brazilian Steamship Co. to see the manager, who had charge of the stocks in that company, left by her brother. In the private office she was talking over the advisability of selling her shares, when she was surprised to see Ferne La Rue's husband enter the outer office, go to the ticket window, and begin a busy talk with the ticket seller. Quick as a flash, Marcia shifted her position so that she could not be seen. She never could have told why she did this, but the importance of it came back to her many a time in after life. For three days things went on as usual, and Marcia saw little of her neighbors, but found herself staying up every night, and sitting in the semi-dark of her front room while the La Rues talked and talked in subdued tones, sometimes to the sound of half-choked sobs. Sometimes a word or two floated through, but never enough to make Marcia understand what was in the wind.

On the fourth night after her trip to the steamship office, she was surprised to hear Ferne come in a little after eight o'clock, accompanied by the step of a man, but clearly not the brisk, springy step of big Ed. Low voices murmured for a few minutes, there was a clink of glasses, and presently silence. Almost at once, came a timid tap on Marcia's door.

Now the two flats in the Florio building that are on opposite sides of the corridor each have two doors opening on the hall, one from the parlor and one from the kitchen, which is near the back part, and the dumbwaiter, equally shared by the two flat dwellers.

It was the kitchen door on which Ferne knocked, ever so lightly. When Marcia opened the door, she found the girl with her lovely, radiant face grown gray with fear, and hardly to be recognized.

"Oh, Mrs. Perkins, I wonder if you would do me a great favor; I am in terrible trouble."

"Why, child, whatever is the matter of you?"

The quaint expression, brought straight from her country home, sounded oddly in the dim hall, which already, in some strange way seemed to hold a tragic aspect. Ferne stood twisting a fragile lace handkerchief in her trembling hands. Twice she tried to speak before the words came.

"Mrs. Perkins, would you go over to Jersey City with me?"

"But where? And, child, what ails you to look like that?"

"My husband——" she hesitated, then went desperately on: "I found a letter, and he is going to meet a woman—I must know—will you go with me?"

"What are you going to do, if he does?"

"Nothing, only I must know the truth. I must see with my own eyes. He seemed to be so good, and yet——"

Goodness was scarcely the quality Marcia would have applied to big Ed, but even to her unsophisticated ears there seemed something phony in Ferne's manner, although her terror was undoubtedly real.

"But didn't you bring your cousin in with you? I thought I heard some one else come in."

"Yes, Cousin William don't feel very well tonight, and he is lying down on the couch. He'll probably go to sleep, and if he wakes up before we get back he'll just go home. I'll leave a note for him."

A little more coaxing, and Marcia consented to what seemed to her a wild escapade into unknown regions.

Ten minutes later they started forth. A taxi was waiting for them, and this seemed such a wild extravagance to Marcia that it awakened new suspicions. In fact, she began to feel quite like a detective.

She had not been in the city long, but she was naturally sharp, and had a good idea of location, so it took but a few minutes to realize that they were headed for Broadway. Presently they stopped at Churchill's.

Marcia quickly asked what this meant, and Ferne said: "Oh, I thought we might as well stop first at some of the places where they might have gone for a drink or a dance; perhaps we may not have to go as far as Jersey."

"But what kind of a place is this? I am not dressed up for any party," objected the older woman.

"Oh, that's all right. People will think you are my mother." Then, musingly, "A good many people know me here."

"Then don't they know your mother?"

"My mother? Hardly; I never knew her myself."

The remark was made so carelessly that the carelessness doubled its tragedy to Marcia, and with a grim look of determination she made up her mind to see this through, whatever it might mean. So Ferne and Marcia entered the brilliant restaurant.

Blasé as most of its patrons are, all eyes turned on the strangely assorted pair as they leisurely went from front to back. Ferne seemed hard to please in the location of a table. Seeming without thinking to ask her companion's taste, she ordered tea for both, waited only to take a sip or two when it came, paid the waiter, and again slowly trailed the length of the room.

Then followed a most unusual Odyssey for Ferne, conspicuous in orchid charmeuse, and hat of orchid gauze, brim and crown made entirely of tiny lilies-of-the-valley; Marcia, in substantial black silk. Together they made the round of a dozen of the more glittering cafés, even a really lurid one or two, but as it was comparatively early, it did not rouse Marcia's detective suspicions to any great extent. Possibly her suspicions were busy in another direction. In many of the places Ferne bowed to numerous persons, even stopping to talk to one or two. Marcia worried over that taxi charge. When it was near midnight they drew up before an ordinary sort of terminal hotel. Dismissing the chauffeur, they entered, and Ferne quite coolly went to the desk and registered. Marcia was astounded, more so than by anything else of this very surprising night.

"But, my dear child, we aren't going to stay all night?"

"Perhaps. We will go to our rooms and rest a few minutes, and then I think I will just wander around and see if I hear his voice; anyhow we will be sure to catch them at breakfast."

Marcia was absolutely speechless at this, and followed to the rooms, her mind working like the wheels at the waterworks, as she told afterward. The rooms were comfortable, and Ferne, after a whispered talk with a chambermaid, appeared with both nightgowns and toothbrushes, and a couple of magazines.

Marcia debated. Would she ask Ferne outright, as was her impulse, what the real meaning of this adventure could be, or—just what could she do? One thing she did know. She sadly wanted a smoke.

On second thought, she bade Ferne good-night as if she thought everything quite all right. She even looked to see if the key between the rooms was turned, found the card of directions, rang for a boy, went softly out to the hall to meet him, and said: "Mr. Jones had forgotten to get some cigarettes, and he sometimes liked to get up in the night and smoke; would he bring up a pack?"

She waited near the lift until the boy returned, then went to the bathroom of her suite, and proceeded to light up.

"I'll steal back and investigate her flat!" she reflected. "A call there may throw some light on all this mystery."

An hour later, a changed and fortified Marcia went boldly out of the hotel, and finding a policeman, she asked the nearest way to New York. She crossed the river, and quickly getting her bearings when in sight of the "L," she took the first train with a mingled sigh of relief and a little shudder of apprehension as to what might be ahead.

The Florio Flats were all dark as she turned the corner, and she hurried to find her key and almost ran up the stairs, for by that time the intuition that something dreadful awaited had her fully in its grip. Marcia was not used to that strange life of the Bright Lights, where the spangles of pleasure so often have a deadly background.

She entered the little private hall, and almost at once her foot struck something that rolled. Groping in the dark, she picked up what her sense of touch told her was a pink cuff-button.

Just what form Marcia's fear took, she had hardly thought, but all the time in the back of her mind she kept remembering that Ferne had told her once that Cousin William had a fad for carrying large sums of cash on all occasions, and another time she said that he had given her a large life insurance policy on her last birthday. He was in the La Rue rooms now.

The wild goose trip had not fooled Marcia, for whatever faults either of the La Rues had, she never doubted the sincerity of their affection for each other, even if it were of a very hectic kind. No; Ferne evidently wanted to get away and stay away from her flat for some reason.

Quickly as possible she turned on the light and listened, but no sound whatever came from the La Rue flat next-door. Perhaps Cousin William was sleeping.

With all the detective instinct within her aroused to fever pitch, she next made a thorough search of the hall, but found nothing further except a tiny bit of white gauze.

But, as she made her way toward the lower end of the passageway, she detected a faint odor, sweetish and queer, which seemed to come from the La Rue flat.

Like most middle-aged up-country women, Marcia had a wide experience of nursing, but yet she did not at once place the character of the odor.

Going back to her room, she sat down to deliberate, almost unconsciously lighting another of the cigarettes she had bought for "Mr. Jones." Should she try to break into the La Rue flat or should she wait until morning? If there was anything wrong with Cousin William, it might be too late.

Going again into the hall, she stood by the dumbwaiter, pondering. The strange odor seemed to come from the dumbwaiter, and she sniffed it suspiciously.

Suddenly, by an impulse, she opened the door, and tried to move the box that usually carried up the ice and bottled beer and other bodily comforts of the Florio tenants, but the waiter would not move.

Peering into the dim shaft, she could see it was slightly above the next floor. She tugged as hard as the good muscular arms of a practical farm woman would admit, using every ounce of her strength, and the strange odor became stronger.

It was useless, she could not move it an inch.

Any woman who can go hunting real game such as they have in northern New Hampshire, and could shoot with the best of them, usually has a pretty good stock of both courage and determination. With a look that boded ill for any one who put an obstacle in her path, she marched back into her tiny kitchen, opened the window, tore off her outer skirts, and in saucy red flannel under-petticoat proceeded to mount the fire escape, as she remembered that the flat just above was vacant. Half-way up, she thought of the question of light, and backed down again, got a quarter from her pocketbook, slipped it under her waist, and again started up the ladder. This might have seemed a queer thing for her to do on such an errand, but all the tenants being such short-lived Florioites, as a rule each flat was equipped with a quarter gas meter.

Fortunately, the catch of the window was out of order, and she stepped into the room and found her way to the gas meter. But, before putting in her quarter, she tried one of the jets with a match. It lit; turning it down to

just enough flame for her to see, she opened the door into the hall, and then the dumbwaiter door.

Even Marcia's strong nerve deserted her for a moment, for, as the door swung open, an arm flapped out, and the hand almost struck her! Recovering herself, she realized that the hand had merely swung out by being released from where it had been wedged.

Putting forth all her strength, she somehow managed to half pull and half drag a body from the box-like enclosure. Fortunately the victim was not a large man, and Marcia got him into the little kitchen without much noise. Her first action was to feel for the heart, and it seemed to her there was a slight flutter. Next she quickly and skillfully untied the chloroformed bandage from over the face. It was this cloth that gave out the pungent odor she noticed in the lower hall. Then she recognized him from a picture she had seen on Ferne's dressing-table. He was Cousin William!

It was now about three in the morning, just the time when people are sleeping soundest, and early yet for the milk wagons. Only for seconds she deliberated, then dragged him to the outer hall, carefully turned out the gas, and with infinite care and much effort managed to get him downstairs and into her own rooms.

The next morning a very sick man lay on Marcia's front room couch, but a live man, at any rate, and a man who had talked and confided in her.

She went to the drug store telephone, where she first called up the Brazilian Steamship Co. and asked what sailings there were that morning, and being told the *Para* sailed at daybreak, she hardly thought it worth while to make inquiries about passengers.

Thanking them, she rang off, then called up the Jersey City Hotel, where she had passed such a queer half-hour. She had not seen the name that Ferne had registered the night before, but she did remember the number of the room.

Calling for 487, she waited with a very grim expression on her homely, fresh colored face.

A startled "Hello!" came over the wire.

"Is that you, Ferne La Rue? Yes, this is Marcia Perkins, and I am at the drug store right on the corner of the Florio Flats. You come home, young lady, as quick as you can get here. Take two taxis, if you can, one to push, and one to pull, but get here. I've got something that partly belongs to you, I suppose. It's somewhat damaged, but time may help."

By this it will be seen that Marcia, with all her nerve, was rather hysterical herself, and no wonder.

Middle-aged ladies don't go pulling men out of dumbwaiters, like an overdone pie out of an oven, at three in the morning, without feeling the effects of it.

"Oh, Mrs. Perkins, when did you go back, and what do you mean?"

"I have Cousin William in cold storage, quite safe for the present. Your husband sailed this morning for Brazil with Cousin William's bankroll. And next week you are going up to New Hampshire for six months' rest, where the police can't find you as your husband's accomplice, and you are going to live a different life for that six months, if I know it. Then, maybe, gradually you will remember, sort of dim-like sometimes, that you did have a mother once upon a time."

Marcia rung off.

GIGANTIC PLANS FOR THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

THE construction of the Channel tunnel, says the London Daily Mail, will, with the exception of the Panama Canal, be the most stupendous engineering enterprise yet planned. The total length, including the approaches in England and France, will be thirty miles, of which rather more than twenty-one and a half miles will be under the sea.

The first work was done on the tunnel in 1874, when a French company sank an experimental shaft in France. In 1881 the South-Eastern Railway Company's chairman, Sir. E. Watkin, obtained an act permitting him to sink a shaft on the English side. A boring was driven for 2,015 yards toward the Channel, when in 1882 the construction was stopped by the government. Since then the scheme has been in abeyance, but in 1913 the government called for reports from naval and military authorities with a view to permitting the construction if they were favorable. Then the war came and nothing more could be done.

The present plans provide for the building of two tunnels, each eighteen feet in diameter, connected by cross galleries at intervals of 200 yards. The lines would be worked by electricity as in the case of the Simplon tunnel, which is twelve and a half miles long, and at present the longest.

The maximum depth of water on the route is 180 feet, and a cover of chalk 100 feet thick would be left undisturbed above the crown of the tunnel to provide against any danger from an enemy or the sea, so that the tunnel would descend to a level of about 280 feet below the sea's surface.

Iron tubes will be built up as the tunnel advances, precisely as in the London tubes. Owing to the extraordinary advance in the art of tunnelling in recent years the work could be done quickly and it is estimated that the tunnel itself could be completed in five or five and a half years.

The cost before the war was estimated at $30,000,000, which amount now probably would have to be considerably increased—to $200,000,000, or even $125,000,000. The working expenses before the war were calculated at $2,100,000 a year and the income at $7,75,000, but both estimates probably would now be exceeded.

Before the war it was thought that British rolling stock, which differs slightly in gauge from French and Continental rolling stock, could not be run over Continental lines. But experience during the war, when many thousands of British wagons and locomotives have been used on the French lines, has proved that this difficulty does not exist.

It would be possible to shorten the journey to Paris greatly. Before the war the quickest service was in six hours, forty-five minutes. With the tunnel the journey could be done in six hours, whatever the weather. The customs examination could be carried out in the trains.

London would be in direct communication with every part of Europe where the gauge is similar to our own. Through carriages could be run to every Continental capital except Petrograd, as in Russia the gauge is too wide to admit of standard trains.

The Bagdad line and its connections, now completing, will give a complete route from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf. This line is connected by tracks of varying gauge (some of which will not admit standard rolling stock) with Jerusalem and Cairo, and from Cairo eventually a railway is to be carried to the Cape.

Ultimately the Indian system will be connected with the Bagdad Railway, and a line has already been carried some distance west from the Indian system through Southern Bluchistan, so that it is no mere dream that one day trains will run from London to Calcutta or Bombay.

A CRYTOGRAM CASE

By DETECTIVE TOM LARKIN.

I WAS sent at an early hour one morning to The Bronx. Nothing was said of the business for which I was required, and so I neither expected anything exciting nor interesting, mysterious nor sensational.

Of course it was flattering in the extreme to be deemed "a highly skillful and discreet officer of the first rank," for that was the kind of individual the person who had written from Oldenburg Seminary required "to be turned on" at a moment's notice; but, although young and enthusiastic, still I did not much fancy the business upon which I was bound. When I had Oldenburg Seminary pointed out to me, I was perhaps more disgusted than ever, for I found that the building was a "seminary for the higher education of daughters of gentlemen."

I paused at the gate before ringing, and that little delay proved to me that I was anxiously looked for. While my hand was still on the bell the wide glass doors of the great brick mansion slowly opened, and a superb footman appeared. He advanced in a manner quite in keeping with the character of the building, and I was just feeling rather conscious of my unfitness for the description of officer required, when the mighty creature reassured me by saying:

"I am glad you have arrived, officer; I was afraid I was too late for my usual constitootional."

"What's the matter here?" I inquired; "burglary—murder? Or is it elopement?"

"I can't tell, sir," the servant returned. "The general servants know nothing; only those more immediately attached to the school department are admitted into the secrets of the charnel-house. But I see madame—or leastwise miss—has come down to meet you. She must 'a' seen you coming."

"What is the difference between madame and miss?" I asked.

"Madame is the principal, and is a widow—miss is her sister, and is an unmarried elderly lady, as you can see."

I did see that by the time we reached the broad flight of steps leading up to the door and veranda.

"Are you the officer?" she asked, in a kind of awed whisper.

"I am," I replied.

"I am afraid that madame will consider you—a—very young——" she went on, leading the way into a small reception parlor. "The words used in our communication I think were 'a highly skillful and discreet officer.'"

"I think, madame," I said, "I, like you, have arrived at the years of discretion."

The speech was a brutally rude one, and I regretted it as soon as it was uttered, for the lady's face grew as red as fire. However, I could not help it, for I was annoyed at being sent to a girls' school-house first, and, secondly, to be deemed a boy or an inexperienced youth.

"Take a seat, please," the lady proceeded, and she rung a bell, which was immediately answered by a maid dressed in black, with white collar and cuffs.

"Has madame come down?"

"Yes, miss."

"Kindly inform her the officer has arrived, and is in waiting."

The girl bowed and soon returned to say that madame would see miss and the officer. Then she led the way to a large room opening upon the grounds behind the house. These were very spacious, and my eyes fell upon from twenty to thirty girls, or rather young ladies, who seemed to be enjoying themselves not a little.

A tall, majestic-looking woman, clad in the glossiest and blackest of black satins, rose from a chair by the fire as we entered. Her eyes were dark, her skin like ivory, and the black dress she wore was trimmed with old lace of a similar hue to her own skin. A diamond brooch sparkled at her throat and a diamond ring glittered on her large round finger. She waved her right hand to a chair, and I silently took a seat. The servant retired. Mrs. Crozier and Miss Kenyon also sat down.

"I have sent for you," began Mrs. Crozier. "But, by the way, what is your name?"

"Inspector Poynter," I replied.

"Indeed!" said the elder lady, opening her eyes with just a show of interest. "Oh. I am very familiar with your name, and I am glad you have been selected to come here. I would have expected an older man."

At this I merely smiled, not venturing to speak again.

"I regret to say that, after years of the most profound peace and matchless prosperity, I fear we are standing on the brink of ruin. A scholastic establishment should be above suspicion and above reproach. When once suspicion arises regarding an establishment like Oldenburg Seminary, it is equivalent to ruin; and, sir, I am to-day looking ruin in the face."

"I scarcely understand you," I remarked.

"And yet it is plain enough," Mrs. Crozier continued. "We have a thief or thieves in this house. Do you think that my rich patrons would permit their daughters to remain one hour under this roof after hearing it rumored that unprincipled persons have been even inadvertently admitted here? You perceive now why I wished the authorities to send me a discreet officer?"

I bowed.

"During the last six months articles have been missed mysteriously and never recovered. I dismissed numberless servants, until the registry people were beginning to think I was becoming capricious. During these last three months I have had all servants under efficient control, and during the same period the dormitories of the ladies, and the rooms of the maids who attend upon them, have been nightly isolated from the rest of the household, and still the thefts continue among the young ladies. I consulted our clergyman last Saturday, and he advised me to apply for a discreet detective officer."

"What do you propose doing?" I asked.

"I have given the young ladies a holiday. I desire all their boxes to be searched. They always leave their keys, when requested, for the convenience of the maid who looks after their linen. Their keys are left in their rooms now."

"And you wish me to conduct this search?"

"Yes."

"And suppose we find the culprit," I proceeded—"would you give her in custody and prosecute?"

"No, no. It is the prosecution and exposure we wish to avoid."

"I can understand that," I answered; "but when I succeed in unmasking a criminal, I consider it my duty to take that criminal a prisoner."

"Even if the person robbed does not wish to prosecute?"

"No," I answered. "But the law can compel persons to prosecute."

"In such a case as we are likely to discover, it would very likely be a crime to prosecute. Pilfering must be a mania among young ladies of fortune. If we find out such a kleptomaniac, it would be only wise and just to hand her over to her relations. The knowledge that an officer of the law had discovered her guilt would be the best safeguard against future offenses. I hope you agree with me. If we find the guilty person out, we shall ask you to accompany her and my sister to the parents, who, for their own sakes, will be glad to prevent scandal, and look after the misguided child."

I made no more objections; indeed, those I had made were put forward because I did not like the job. However, I now undertook it, and for the next two hours I went from dormitory to dormitory and from room to room of the elder and more aristocratic scholars, examining their boxes and bags in company with Mrs. Crozier, Miss Kenyon, an assistant governess, and two maids.

There were thirty-two pupils. Box No. 29 was a curious one, of Indian workmanship. One by one the dainty garments were turned out and replaced after the box was empty. Then an old-fashioned shelf or shuttle was explored, but it contained nothing but trifles, which were known to belong to its owner, Miss Berenice Glencross. Beneath this was a drawer, which was found full of letters. In turning these over, my eye fell upon one of them, and I read these words: "Your affectionate guardian, C. Kilgour."

I was about to turn away from this examination, when I glanced once more at the shuttle and the drawer. It seemed to me that the depth of the shuttle added to the depth of the drawer would not make up the total depth, and so I said after a very superficial measurement: "We have a false bottom here," and I proceeded to examine the construction of the affair. In a few minutes I found the secret out. The horizontal side turned outward and downward. There was then visible a clear inch between the top of the drawer and the bottom of the shuttle, and this last easily turned up, disclosing to the ladies and their servants twenty-three articles of the stolen or missing jewelry, in addition to a small diamond brooch and two rings which Mrs. Crozier could not recognize at all.

"Strange!" murmured Mrs. Crozier, after the first moments of noisy excitement were over. "I always in my heart suspected her—she is so quiet, silent and cat-like. Bring her here at once!"

She was brought in from some exciting pastime, and evidently far from suspecting the crushing sight she was about to see; a fine, tall, well-rounded girl, with a radiant pink face and very dark sparkling eyes. Her yellow hair had fallen from the ribbon that confined it, and this only added to her wonderful and uncommon beauty. She no doubt looked forward to meeting some agreeable visitor, for delight and happiness were in her every movement. When she saw the gloomy and condemnatory faces of the principal of the school, the governess and the servants, and when her eyes fell upon me and saw the condition of her belongings, she cried in a pathetic and faltering voice, the ring of which I shall never forget:

"Oh, what is this? What does it all mean?"

"It means," said Mrs. Crozier, "that you are a thief; that this gentleman is a police officer, who will convey you to the house of your guardian at once."

"I a thief—police officer! Oh, for heaven's sake, madame, do not say that! Do not turn away from me—all—all of you! I am innocent; I am not guilty. You cannot—I am sure you do not—believe me guilty!"

"You are guilty!" cried the governess, sternly and coldly. "The proofs are too convincing," and she, imitating Mrs. Crozier's example, turned her back upon the unhappy girl.

She reeled around once more, her arm outstretched, gazing for one kind look, as I thought a drowning sailor might look for a rope from the shore; and then, finding nothing but silent condemnation, she uttered one low, despairing cry, and fell insensible upon the floor.

"This is cruel work," I cried, involuntarily stooping over her, "and I am no judge of crime or criminals if she is not innocent."

I was asked to have lunch, and during its progress they were supposed to be getting the girl ready for her journey with me to her guardian's house. But it was not to be that day. When I saw her again I found that she was too ill to be moved, and the doctor being sent for, he ordered her to bed at once. I told him who I was and what had occurred, but he pooh-poohed the conduct of the ladies, and said the girl was no doubt the victim of a stupid practical joke, or worse, and as I left the house I came to the conclusion that "something worse" than a practical joke was what really was the matter, and that, if I could help it, I should penetrate to the bottom of the mystery. Circumstances were to favor me in a manner which could only be likened to something closely resembling a dispensation of Providence.

I found my chief one morning about a week after these events poring over a letter in his office.

"Just in time," he said, as I entered. "You remember Dr. Dalziel, formerly of the Police Department?"

"Of course I do," I returned.

"Well. he writes to say that he is concerned in a most mysterious case—not quite professionally; that he has been confined to his house almost entirely for three months; that he knows he is watched, but dare not call in the regular police, for fear of endangering the safety of some person unknown to himself. He asks me to send you, if possible, to his aid. He is so ill that a visit from another doctor would not be suspected; so you had better dress as nearly like a professional sawbones as possible, and I'll have an ambulance here for you in two hours from now."

All this was arranged, and just before one o'clock I drove up in front of Dr. Dalziel's house in Harlem. I alighted, and, to complete my spurious claim to the position of a surgeon, I took out a small case of instruments from the vehicle before entering the house. Glancing rapidly around, I saw no one who looked like a spy, but a youth who was idly kicking his heels against the curb.

I was warmly welcomed by Dr. Dalziel, who was very ill indeed, and could scarcely hobble across his sitting-room.

"I am glad you have come, and we must not lose a moment," the doctor went on in his old, clear way. "I know you will not let a word of what I am about to say escape you. Three months ago—I'll give you the exact date—I was called to see Mr. Kilgour, the shipping merchant, whose place is just above here. What is the matter? You recognize the name Kilgour?"

"Of course I knew the merchant," I replied, "by sight, but I came across the name in another connection about a week ago. Proceed, please."

"When I went up to the house I found him frightfully ill, and very near death. He lay on a funereal-looking bed,

in a large and somber room. His wife sat by his pillow on one side, his married daughter on the other, and his son Wolfrau—fit name—reclined reading in a kind of alcove. The daughter gave way to me. After feeling his pulse, he turned his head to me and from his wife, and from the movement of his lips and the expression of his eyes I understood him to require me to make them leave the room. I immediately asked Mrs. Kilgour to leave me with the patient for a short interval. She answered coldly:

"'My place is beside my husband's bed until the end.'

"'And I stay with mamma,' said Mrs. Rycroft, the daughter, taking up a book, and sitting down again.

"I was indignant, and said:

"'You have called me in, and it will be my duty to report to the authorities if I am prevented from examining the patient in my own way.'

"Upon this I noticed a terrified glance upon the face of Mrs. Kilgour, and it was directed to her son. That young gentleman rose at once, saying suavely:

"'My dear mother, Dr. Dalziel knows his business best. Let us retire," and the three walked out of the room.

"As soon as they had gone, the dying man caught my hand in his bony ones, saying, in a hoarse whisper:

"'They won't leave me a moment with the minister, who suspects nothing. Prescribe now. Come again at night, and persist in being alone again. Then I shall be in a position to clear my conscience—to make a disclosure which I cannot intrust to my own flesh and blood. It is a holy work—a work of restitution. Swear, doctor, that you will aid me, and not desert me.'

"I gave him the most solemn assurance it was in my power to give, called the people in with an easy kind of cheerfulness, and said I would send a soothing medicine over by a man within an hour. In the evening I said I would call again, when I hoped to resume the examination.

"It was seven o'clock when I called in the evening, and the trio left the room immediately I entered.

"'Put this in your pocket at once! They are spying—I am sure of it!' muttered the sick man, pulling a small, elegantly bound book from under his pillow. 'Transcribe and carefully peruse the words and letters underlined by me. They would not let me write. I think you will find information there to enable you to see justice done. Circumstances prevent me from doing it in another way.'

"Then he pointed like a madman toward the door, as I pushed the small volume into my coat pocket. I quickly opened the door, and found Wolfrau Kilgour within a step or two of it, a sardonic smile upon his dark face.

"Could he have overheard anything? I thought not. And yet that evil smile haunted me. I remained with the patient an hour in the presence of the watching relatives, and was preparing to leave when Wolfrau was called out of the room. He returned for his mother, and I passed them in the hall. A gentleman had called with a letter for Mr. Kilgour. Such letters were private, and always addressed to his (this gentleman's) care. He desired to hand it to Mr. Kilgour himself.

"'Mr. Kilgour has no longer any secrets from me,' said the lady, taking the letter and unceremoniously opening it.

"A gleam of triumph flashed into her cold, gray eye, as, turning to her son, she said:

"'At last! The address—the address of——'

"'That is well,' said the son, as I passed out.

"I had all my other patients to visit, and it was nearly half past eleven when I reached home. I fancied that I saw Wolfrau Kilgour watching and following me several times that night. However, all was quiet when I got home. As an additional precaution, notwithstanding, I put the light out and retired to the library, which, as you see, opens on my patch of lawn."

As the doctor spoke he opened the door of the room named. It was in a complete state of wreck—furniture, ornaments, old blue china jars, glass doors, and the mirror even, smashed.

"I am about to explain," he proceeded. "Drawing the curtains, I pulled the book from my pocket. It was the second volume of an early—perhaps the earliest—edition after the monthly parts of 'David Copperfield.' With pen, ink and paper before me, I soon followed the painfully underlined words and letters, and copied them out on this paper.'

"Here he drew a crumpled sheet from his pocket and handed it to me, saying:

"' I now give it to you to copy. Let me explain how it was formed first. Here is another copy of the book.'

"On page one we find:

"'Why bless my life and soul!' said Mr. Omer. 'How do you find yourself?'

"'My' and 'soul' were underlined.

"On page two the first paragraph finishes with 'gasping at his pipe as if it contained a supply of the necessary without which he must perish!'

"'Must perish' were underlined.

"The words together selected from the first thirteen pages ran as follows:

"'My—soul—must perish—should—I—not—do—what—is—needful—I was married—once—before. A sad story—as bad as bad could be; and—I—have a g-r-a-n-d-d-a-u-ght-e-r—living. I h-a-v-e a dread of death—and—of—the solemn hush around me. Time and the world—slipping from beneath—me—it—is—difficult for me—to rest. I am afraid—that the will—the—last will and testament made by—me—may—not—be—f-o-u-n-d. Rain was falling heavily—and it was a wild night w-h-e-n—I—brought—it—f-r-o-m t-o-w-n.'

"I had got so far," proceeded the doctor, "when the French window behind me was wrested open, and I found myself in the grasp of Wolfrau Kilgour. I managed to secret the paper, however; but a terrible struggle ensued for the open book. Old man as I am, I fought hard, knocking the things about as you have seen them. At last the noise of my man coming frightened the intruder, and, making one last effort, he tore the book in two, and fled with the part I had already used.

"I would not let my chauffeur pursue him over the garden wall, nor would I report to the police, for fear of injuring in some way the granddaughter mentioned there," pointing to the paper. "I did a stupid thing then," he went on. "Fearing another attack, in my excitement I determined to post the remainder of the book to a friend—my nephew in the Woolworth Building. Putting it in a wrapper, I addressed it with anything but a steady hand, and walked with my chauffeur to post it in the lamp-post letter-box. That done, my mind was at ease.

"I was too ill to move for four days; then I went to the Woolworth Building. When I asked for the book my nephew opened his eyes, crying:

"'You sent that ragged thing. I thought it was a joke by one of our fellows, so I told my clerk to throw it into the trash-basket.'"

"So the book is lost?" I said.

"Yes, Poynter, and I have been making inquiries about it ever since."

"My men may be more successful," I said. "However, I fancy I know the heiress—the granddaughter," and I explained my recent adventure at Oldenburg Seminary, and the letters signed "Your affectionate guardian, C. Kilgour."

"Let us go there at once," said the doctor.

We went, to find that Mrs. Kilgour had taken the young lady away. I asked when that lady first came to see the girl. Mrs. Crozier answered just before Christmas, and the date proved to be two days after Mr. Kilgour's death.

"Did anything particular occur on that occasion?"

"No," replied Mrs. Crozier; "but," she said, "a week later the lady called again, and incidentally said that she proposed lessening her establishment. Could I take a well-recommended servant off her hands? I was only too glad. A girl came."

"I want to see that girl without being seen," I answered. "Don't hesitate, Mrs. Crozier," I proceeded, "or all New York will to-night be ringing with the outrage done under your roof to one of your pupils."

That settled it. The girl was sent for to pick some paper up from the steps, and I saw one of the most evil faces it has ever been my luck to see on female shoulders.

My assistants worked the waste-paper and second-hand dealers for three weeks unsuccessfully. I proposed acting without it, when one morning I passed an old curiosity shop in Fourth Avenue. Next door was an old dealer in prints. I inquired if he ever got engravings from "David Copperfield."

"Got a mutilated second vol. not an hour ago," he said, and I bought it for a quarter."

On Broadway I met a sergeant of police I knew. After a few words he said:

"I had a sickening charge this morning. A young lady—one of the prettiest creatures I ever saw—given in charge by a milliner, her mistress, for stealing money and jewelry——"

"Found in her school box," I asked, "and her name is Berenice Glencross?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"It's the second charge trumped up against her in a month," I replied; "but it's no good. When will the case be on?"

"Twelve o'clock, after the morning charges."

"I shall be there," I said, and I telegraphed for Dr. Daziel to come at once to the office.

He came to my room at ten minutes past eleven.

"I've found the mutilated book," I said, "and here is the remainder of the message from the dead, contained in the underlined words."

The book was torn away at page thirteen. On page sixteen the remainder began:

"I—buried—it—out—in—the—tool-shed—moved the—heap—of—rubbish back Seek her. Soften your—heart—and you'll bear—sorrow better—for you know the promise, 'As you have done it to one of the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

We went to court, and found the girl on the stand, her mistress, in the witness chair, swearing to the facts of a vile conspiracy. When the girl was asked what she had to say, she merely burst into tears.

I immediately spoke:

"Your honor knows that I do not speak lightly. This is a conspiracy against an innocent girl. I have the case in hand; before the day is out I shall not only prove her innocent but ask for a warrant against the plaintiff and another for conspiracy and corrupt perjury."

To my surprise, the plaintiff broke out into confession at once, abjectly begging for mercy, and owning that she was bribed by her late mistress, Mrs. Kilgour, who had "set her up" in business.

She was removed in custody, and Berenice Glencross was discharged at once.

I had sent an officer for Janet Oldfield, the maid Mrs. Kilgour had placed there. She made a statement to the magistrate equally conclusive of Mrs. Kilgour's guilt. We then drove to the Kilgour house, armed with warrants for the arrest of mother and son, but the latter had had a friend in court who communicated with them, and so the birds had flown, and Berenice Glencross Kilgour would not countenance pursuing them.

The will was found buried in a steel casket in a corner of the gardener's tool-house, under a heap of rubbish. Mr. Kilgour left all his real property and a moiety of the personal estate to his granddaughter—the child of his son Conrad—whom he had condemned for defending his mother when she was unjustly accused by the testator; the other moiety of his personal estates to be equally divided between his second wife, his son and daughter, notwithstanding their heartless cruelty and long lives of persecution.

You will enjoy the story, "A Case of Kidnapping," to be issued in our next number. It was written by a very popular author.

PILING OF CONCRETE PIPE

PIPES made of concrete are a new development in some quarters and have been replacing cast-iron pipes. They are now being used instead of wooden piles in the construction of wharves in Tasmania. A Tasmanian paper reports that the first of 600 concrete cylinders was turned out recently, the cylinders to be used to build the wharf inside the new breakwater at Burnie for the accommodation of deep sea vessels.

The plant has been installed in the blockyard at the harbor, and the proceedings were in the nature of a trial. The concrete cylinders are 10 feet long by 4 feet 6½ inches in diameter, the concrete being 12 inches in thickness.

To produce them a steel cylinder is placed on four wheels, and driven by an electric motor, revolving at the rate of from 250 to 300 revolutions per minute, the concrete is thrown in, and the centrifugal force thus produced gets rid of the water. It takes about a quarter of an hour from the time the mold is set in motion until the concrete cylinder is ready for removal, which is then lifted to a storing place by a crane. Three 12-inch pipes can be turned out in seven minutes. The firm make down to four-inch pipes, and the molding cylinders revolve at a much more rapid rate for the smaller work, decreasing in speed with the increase in the size of the pipe. To obtain the necessary height in constructing the wharf, the concrete cylinders will be placed on top of each other, cemented together, and secured by an eight-inch steel band on the outside at the joint. The hollow space in the cylinders will be filled with sand.

The pipe company secured during October and November last orders for large quantities of concrete piping. One municipality has ordered 5,400 feet for 250 pounds working pressure. Gold mining companies have ordered piping for pressures from 150 pounds down to 50 pounds. Other orders have come in from country districts for culverts, drains, etc. Some excellent test results have been obtained with pipes. Two lengths of four-inch pipes joined together with a collar joint have been tested to 360 pounds per square inch without showing any signs of leakage or sweating.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

POST-OFFICE INSPECTOR LOUIS A. NEWCOME.

YOU enter a room on the mezzanine story of the New York Post-office Building, and a shrewd-looking and bright-eyed boy meets you.

"Is Inspector Newcome in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hand him this card."

The boy disappears into a second room, but in an instant he returns and says:

"Walk in, sir."

At a desk just beyond the door, and in front of one of the windows looking out upon Park Row, a gentleman looks up as we enter.

"Inspector Newcome?" we asked.

"Yes, sir—glad to see you—take a seat."

We took one of the soft and comfortable seats. Here it may be remarked that in the government offices in the Post-office Building, the desks and furniture are first-class. Uncle Sam has evidently done the right thing, or the contractors have for a good price.

After some other conversation we inquired:

"Why do people steal letters—when they are always found out?"

"Because," replied the Inspector, as a smile spread over his face," because the fools are not all dead yet."

"Do you find much mystery about it?"

"Very little—all that is necessary is to keep a good watch."

"A good watch!" Ah, we thought, that is the secret of the government being able to carry on its great business in all the departments. In the Custom House, Internal Revenue, Post-office, and every branch, detectives are watching and investigating at all times.

Just think of it—over eleven hundred persons were employed in the New York post-office alone, and the receipts aggregated over four millions of dollars. The amount of money paid and issued in the money-order department was over sixty millions.

Two inspectors stationed in New York were the watch on all this business—also of Brooklyn, and in New Jersey.

"I've just returned from a trip to another part of our district," said Inspector Newcome, "where there has been a mail robbery."

"In what State?"

"Connecticut. We are called that way quite often. When we require it, we can get assistance from the inspector stationed in Boston."

The other inspector in New York was Samuel Gardner, a son of Police-Justice Gardner. He acted in association with the other inspector, or they worked up their cases separately.

"In this Connecticut case," continued Inspector Newcome, "a young man, employed by a contractor for transporting mails, worked his finger into a hole in one corner of a mail-bag, and extracted a registered package. He drove into a stream, tore the envelope into pieces, and threw them away. He obtained twenty-five dollars in Canadian currency."

"Of course he went off on a spree?"

"Yes; but he stole other money from his father, and then went off for a high old time."

"He was another fool."

"Certainly. It was not long before the post-office authorities knew that a package had been stolen, and the kind of money that was in it. As soon as I reached Connecticut I learned that a young man who handled the mails was spending Canadian money."

"What next?"

"Why, late one night I pounced upon him in a notorious house, and he was the most terrified and repentant individual you ever saw."

"A sad case."

"Most of them are. It is sudden temptation—because money is in their hands. They yield and are lost. But think of the vast army who never touch a dollar. The amount of robbery in post-offices and of the mails en route is absolutely nothing in comparison with the amount of money and valuables transported."

"You have some desperate characters to deal with?"

"Oh, yes; I'll show you a cane, and then tell you its history."

The Inspector went to the opposite side of the room, and opened a closet. He took out a cane of hard-wood and gave it to us to examine. In the same closet were knives, pistols, and other things which had been taken from mail-robbers.

In a corner of the room were some large mail-bags which had clean-cut slits in them, that had been made to extract the letters.

As the Inspector walked across the room we saw that he was above medium height, with a lithe, sinewy figure. He looked in the bloom of health and vigor. His head was well made, with regular and expressive features. His hair was cut pretty short. His complexion was light, and his eyes, while very kindly, had a look in them which showed that he had an abundance of firmness and courage.

Standing with the cane in his hand, he said:

"One of the men engaged in the robbery of mail-bags from Dodd's express wagon—a desperate fellow—escaped to California. He was frightened back to New York, and swore he would kill me. This man, with two of his friends, came to the city on the same train with me."

"Did they know you were on board?"

"No. I was asleep in a seat, with my cap drawn down over my face, and they did not observe me."

"Lucky."

"Rather, as you will see. Next day I heard of the arrival of the robber, and traced him to a hotel on Broadway.

Going to the room I rapped, and the door was cautiously opened."

"Who did you see?"

"The robber himself. I forced the door in by main strength, and the fellow began to beat me over the head with this cane."

The cane was calculated to do good service, especially in the hands of a powerful and angry man.

"He rattled it over my head and shoulders in a most lively manner," said Inspector Newcome, "but I managed to tumble him over on a bed and put handcuffs on him."

"What did the other two men do?"

"Well, I made my rush so suddenly and successfully at their friend that they threw up their hands and surrendered."

This is the sort of man Newcome was.

Not only in the post-office detective service, but he was the same when in the employment of the United States marshals for the southern and eastern districts.

Also when he carried on a private detective business. Wily and intelligent in the pursuit of all kinds of transgressors against the laws, he was ready to "sail in" promptly and effectively when it became necessary to make an arrest.

"Come along quietly," was the expression of his eyes.

"You must come, dead or alive," was the reading of a second look.

He pursued a man through Canada, then out on the western prairies, and finally captured him in Omaha, Nebraska, and brought him back. Then he made the investigations which led to the arrest of young Williamson, alias "Gentleman Joe," who wrote a great number of letters in the name of a prominent New York clergyman, and afterwards died in State prison.

"The most exciting experience of my life," said Inspector Newcome, as he resumed his seat, "was in the Shawangunk Mountains, New York, hunting a gang of robbers who had robbed post-offices and committed other depredations through Orange and Sullivan counties."

"Give me an outline of the facts."

"The gang lived on the top of the Shawangunk Mountains, several miles south of the Newburg and Ellenville plank road. Although suspicion had rested on them and they were really the guilty parties, none of the stolen property had ever been found in their possession, and, indeed, not the slightest evidence had even been secured against them. I disguised when I went after that bunch."

"What character did you take?"

"A buyer of poles for the Western Union Telegraph Company. I was enabled to travel all over the mountains without arousing the suspicions of the gang. Occasionally I visited the farmers below to buy telegraph poles."

"Did you make the acquaintance of the gang?"

"I purposely became intimate with them. I told them I had been a tough customer in my day, but had reformed."

"You found them a hard lot?"

"The boldest set of villains I ever encountered. Through a partition at the Summitville Depot I heard the gang arrange to rob the Winterton depot, several miles distant."

"What time of the year was this?"

"It was in March. The ground was covered with snow, on which a heavy crust had formed."

"Did you follow the men?"

"When they left in the direction of Winterton depot, I started off for the same place by a roundabout way. Near the depot I had to descend a steep hill, when my foot slipped and I slid to the bottom."

"Did they hear you?"

"They had already broken into the depot, and the noise I made alarmed them at first, but they finally concluded that it was only a stone rolling down the hill. I grasped my revolver and prepared to defend myself if necessary."

"What next?"

"The thieves secured their booty and took their departure for their rendezvous in the mountains. I followed, carefully taking note of every movement they made. I hid in the bushes near the house of the leader, and saw that the plunder was buried in the vicinity."

During the night Detective Newcome discovered a place in an old wall leading to a cave where the proceeds of this and many other robberies had been buried. Postage stamps, valuable packages stolen from the mails, and a great variety of merchandise were stored in the cave. The gang were arrested, tried and convicted, and are still in prison. Detective Newcome walked not less than fifty miles on this eventful night. He was complimented by the department in Washington for his perseverance and skill in the management of the whole affair.

Inspector Newcome was a native of Massachusetts. During the Civil War he was a "drummer-boy" of the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, and later enlisted as a private in the Sixty-sixth Massachusetts Regiment. Before he became a detective he was in a commercial business. He had been an inspector of the Post-office Department two years.

As the Inspector had the best kind of conversational powers, an interview with him was always pleasant; and when, in a case of this nature, he was tempted to relate something of his history and adventures, it became highly interesting. While he talked he answered telegraphic dispatches, and went on with all the business of the office.

A good-looking, fat, and genteel-appearing man came in and whispered a word or two.

"That is Officer B——," said the Inspector. "He is a member of the city police, but was detailed for post-office work. He has made a good many arrests. Will you smoke?"

"No, I thank you."

Others were waiting to see the Inspector, and we took our departure from the room.

Special Agent Crawford C. Adams is the next sketch for this series. It is very interesting. Watch for it!

A LETTER'S LONG DELAY

FIFTEEN years was required for a letter to travel the distance between St. Louis, Mo., and Lead, S. D. The letter, which recently reached here, was addressed to Miss Effie Pitts, Campbell House, and was delivered to William Campbell, proprietor of the place. Effie Pitts was a waitress in the Campbell House dining-room fifteen years ago. She left Lead some years ago and married. Four years ago she visited friends in Lead, but her present place of residence is unknown.

The letter was postmarked at St. Louis on October 12, 1904. It also bears a Lead postmark, showing that it had been received here April 25, 1919. It had been almost fifteen years en route. Where the letter was during this long interval of time is a mystery.

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONSPIRATORS

COLE stood undecided. He saw that he had been in the house for nearly a half an hour. It was growing late, and he would have to bring the interview to an end. A thought struck him, and then placing the knives in its case, he put it into his pocket. When Nellie saw her persecutor do this she drew a sigh of relief, and began to hope that Cole would leave the house, now that he saw that she would not yield to his demands. In this case she was doomed to be disappointed, for no sooner had Cole placed the knife in his pocket than he drew out his handkerchief and saturated it with chloroform. Nellie struggled to free herself, but Cole kept his knees pressed on her breast, so that she could not get up from the bed.

He then clapped the handkerchief over her face, and in a few minutes she yielded to the influence of the drug and became unconscious.

"Now I will have her in spite of all," Cole triumphantly exclaimed as he stood looking on the prostrate form and admired the beauty of the girl's features. He then turned and commenced to look around the room as if in search of something. At last he saw what he wanted, and took up a large circular cloak, which he wrapped about Nellie's form. This done, Cole went to the window and looked out. He saw that his carriage was still waiting at the door, and then he returned to the bed, took Nellie in his arms, carried her downstairs, and after waiting a few moments in the hall carried her down the front steps and placed her inside of the carriage before any one saw him. Cole then turned to the driver and said, as he prepared to enter the vehicle:

"Drive to the rendezvous."

"All right, sir."

Bang! went the ecarriage-door. The driver whipped up the horses, and in a few minutes the vehicle was being drawn rapidly away from the lawyer's house. After driving for about twenty minutes the carriage drew up in front of the hut, where later on in the day the dwarf and his master entered. Cole seemed to be familiar with the place, for the minute that the carriage stopped he jumped out and went to the door, where he gave the usual signal, and it was opened by the old hag.

As soon as this was done the scoundrel returned to the carriage, took the unconscious girl up in his arms and carried her into the house. The carriage drove off and the old hag closed the door of the hut. Cole entered the middle room on the ground-floor of the hut and deposited his burden on a lounge. The old hag followed her visitor and closed the door of the room after her.

She was about seventy years of age, and was as hideous as the dwarf who had followed the detective. Her shoulders stooped, her face was brown and wrinkled; she was toothless with the exception of the two teeth which stood out in the front like fangs, and what remained of her gray hair fell in matted masses down her back. Without saying a word the hag crept to the lounge, and with a hideous expression upon her face she gazed upon Nellie. She then turned upon Cole, and pointing to the insensible girl exclaimed in a squeaky voice:

"Who is she?"

"Nellie Frazer," answered Cole, as he eyed the hag, and tried to see what was passing in her mind from the expression of her countenance. In this he failed signally.

"She's pretty. I hate pretty people. Ah, wouldn't I like to claw her eyes out and spoil her beauty!" This the hag hissed out, and she stretched out her arms and worked her fingers as if she were already carrying out the tenure of her thoughts.

"'Tis well you hate her," said Cole, "but I don't want you to hurt her. I intend to keep her a prisoner here, and I want you to act as her jailer."

"Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!" laughed the old hag. This proposition seemed to please her. "Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he! I'll act as her jailer. Mother Carey will act as her jailer. What fun I will have in tormenting her. Pretty, pretty little dear! Oh, how she will love her Mother Carey; how she will love me! Ha, ha, ha! he, he, he!"

The demoniac laugh rang out, and sounded like the glee of one of the nymphs of hades. Not satisfied yet, the hag danced around the room, waved her hands in the air, and then, after her strength was exhausted, she took a seat in an old rocking-chair in front of the lounge. Cole looked on at the old woman's actions with a smile upon his face as he rubbed his hands and muttered to himself:

"I couldn't have found a better keeper. Mother Carey will watch the girl closely, and she will have no chance to escape."

After Mother Carey had recovered her breath she looked up at Cole and, in the same squeaky voice, said:

"Look here, Pete Cole, how much will ye give me to keep the gal in the cell downstairs?"

"I don't want her kept downstairs in that damp place," Cole returned.

"Where do you want her kept?"

"Upstairs."

"All right, I'll keep the wench in the garret, in the room where years ago they kept Ella Rose."

"That will do."

"How much are you going to give me?"

"Ten dollars."

"That's not enough."

"How much do you want?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Too much; I'll give forty."

"All right."

Cole took out of his pocket two twenty-dollar gold-pieces and gave them to the hag.

"They're not queer?" Mother Carey said, after she had turned them over and examined them closely.

"No; they're all right."

"Correct. Pick the gal up, and bring her upstairs."

Peter Cole did as the old hag said, and carried Nellie upstairs. Mother Carey led the way, and when they came to the top of the house she stopped before an iron door, and opened it after a great deal of trouble, admitting Cole and herself into the room which was to be Nellie's prison, and in which, as she had said, a girl by the name of Ella Rose had been confined years ago.

Mother Carey found very little trouble in obtaining a light, and soon brought a candle after the man had placed Nellie on a common cot which stood in one corner. The room was built so that not a particle of daylight could enter it. It was poorly furnished, having nothing but the cot, one chair, and a rickety table. It was in this dungeon —for I can call it nothing else—that Nellie was to spend many weary hours. Cruel fate! The poor girl was to suffer now more than she had done before in her whole lifetime. She was still unconscious, and Cole and the hag left her alone until consciousness returned.

The old hag locked the door of the cell, and then she and Cole descended to the lower story to the room where all of the conferences generally took place. Mother Carey busied herself about, and set before Cole a bottle of liquor and a glass. When she had done this she said:

"Now, Pete, we will drink."

She filled the two glasses to the brim, and then she raised her glass in the air, and signified for Cole to do the same. Cole obeyed the woman; then they knocked their glasses together and drunk the liquor.

"That's good! Smack! smack!"

The hag's eyes danced with glee as she deposited the glass on the table. She was about to say something, when both she and Cole were startled by loud knocking at the door.

"Who can that be?" exclaimed Cole as he jumped from his chair and cocked his revolver, ready to use it at a moment's warning. At first he thought that it might be the police, and he said to Mother Carey:

"Don't move or make any noise. I am afraid that some fly cop may have seen me and followed the carriage here."

"Knock! knock! knock!"

Mother Carey went into the hall and listened. As she did so a loud voice exclaimed:

"Open the door or I will break it down!"

The old hag turned and looked at Cole to see what he thought she had better do.

Peter Cole listened until the man who was pounding on the door spoke again; then he said:

"Mother Carey, you can open the door."

"Who is it?"

"Why in the name of hades can't you open this door?"

Mother Carey's face now brightened up, and she hurried forward to open the door, exclaiming:

"It's Lew Clews; why couldn't I make that out before?"

With trembling hands the hag slid back the bolt, and Lew Clews entered, closely followed by the hideous dwarf Phil. They were the same persons whom we have seen in a previous chapter, and whom we followed to the door of the hut. The man Clews was furious, and swore at Mother Carey for not opening the door more quickly.

"You old chaggle-tooth, you; why don't you come quicker? Don't you know my time is valuable?" Clews growled as he swung his arm around on entering the room and tried to hit the dwarf alongside the head. Phil was too sharp for his master, and cleverly dodged the blow, which hit Cole on the side of the face.

"What did you do that for?" exclaimed Cole, as he jumped from the chair and glared at Clews, who had not seen him until now. Clews' anger subsided in a minute, and stretching forth his hand for Cole to shake, he said:

"Hello, Pete! you here? Excuse me; I didn't mean to hit you; I was trying to make that dumb-headed cuss of mine behave himself."

With this explanation Peter Cole was satisfied and, after shaking Clews by the hand, the two sat down at the table and sealed their friendship over a glass of whisky. The dwarf had perched himself on the end of the lounge and, when he saw his master drink, his eyes sparkled, he rubbed his hands, smacked his lips, and remarked in a begging tone:

"Phil likes whisky—whisky is good."

This caused Clews to turn around and look at the dwarf. The drink which he had just taken seemed to put him in a good humor, and noticing the yearning expression on Phil's face he poured out a glass of the liquor and, handing it to the poor creature, said:

"There you are, Phil."

Phil clutched the glass in a greedy manner, and putting it to his mouth, drained it at a gulp, muttering as he handed it back to Clews:

"Whisky is good."

The old hag stood in a corner, a silent spectator of this scene. Now she came forward, caught Phil by the ear, and jerked him off of the lounge, crying out in a fierce voice:

"Git out of here, ye bla'guard. Git down stairs, ye good-for-nothing divil, and fetch me up the wood I told you to chop this morning."

Phil glanced at his persecutor with hatred, and jerking away from Mother Carey, he dashed towards the door. The old woman's back was turned towards him. The dwarf stopped at the door, and seeing a pillow on the floor, he picked it up. He turned around, and with all his strength threw the pillow at the old hag, hitting her on the head and knocking her to the floor, face downward.

"He, he, he! Old Snag-tooth! Pull Phil's ear again."

The dwarf dashed out of the door, and for some time his "he, he, he" could be heard ringing through the house as he hurried along the hall and made his way to the cellar.

Mother Carey picked herself up, none the worse for the fall. She was furious, and if Phil had been within her reach she would have given him as sound a thrashing as he ever had in his life before. Not seeing the dwarf she cursed loudly for some minutes, stamping her feet in rage, and then went to a corner of the room, where she picked up a heavy leather horse-whip, and started out with the intention of going to the cellar and laying it on Phil's back. But the dwarf was too cute to be caught in a trap. When he entered the cellar he locked the door at the head of the steps after him, and when Mother Carey went to open it to go downstairs she found her progress barred.

For some time the hag pounded on the door, and tried in every way imaginable to get Phil to unlock it, coaxing and threatening alternately, but it was of no use. Phil turned a deaf ear to all entreaties, and commenced to chop his wood. Finding that she was only losing time and wasting her breath Mother Carey returned to the room, drank a big horn of whisky, rested herself in the old rocking-chair, and went to sleep. This scene had greatly amused Cole and Clews, and they roared with laughter at Mother Carey's discomfiture.

"I tell you," said Clews, "that Phil is a perfect devil. He fears no one."

"Yes, he does. He's afraid of you," rejoined Cole.

"Well, I'm the only one that he is afraid of," answered Clews, with a chuckle, as he took another drink.

"By the way, Lew," said Pete Cole, after a short silence, "where did you first come across the dwarf?"

"I picked him up out of the bay outside of Boston when he was a baby. His parents had put him in a soap-box, and had thrown him overboard. I noticed his ugliness, and that is the reason I spared his life and adopted him."

"Couldn't you never find out whose child he was?"

"Never, although I searched high and low."

"He's an ugly cuss."

"Yes; as ugly as Old Nick himself and as shrewd. Put him on a scent and he never misses."

"Talking about putting him on a scent," said Cole after a short silence, "how did he succeed in tracing that detective cuss?"

"First rate! Ha! ha! If Foss knew that Phil had seen everything that he did, and that he was being watched, he would have been more careful how he acted."

"I'm glad that Phil was so successful. Did he learn much?"

"Yes; a good deal; and we will have to put that detective out of the way if you value our security."

"Why, has he found any clues?"

"Yes; he's found some things which may prove very important clues."

"What are they?"

"A locket, with a picture in it, and—the most important of all—some scraps of paper."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, we will have to get him out of the way—that is certain."

A long and protracted silence followed this, and then Cole said:

"Lew, I have made an appointment with Suggs and the two women at the Varieties this evening, and then we will talk over what is best to be done in regard to this matter, and several other things."

"I'll go with you. How did you succeed with Frazer?"

"Failed!" Cole exclaimed in a tone of voice which showed plainly his chagrin.

"How was that?"

"Well, you know that that detective rescued Nellie Frazer this morning?"

"I do."

"After that he went down to the lawyer's office, and just as I came in he was going out, or made out as if he was, as was proved afterward. Frazer and I had a stormy interview, and then I called up Suggs to do the detective business when, just as we were about to put the 'darbies' on the lawyer, who should come in but that cussed detective, who spoiled the whole business; and Suggs and I had to skip."

"Well, what next?"

"I went out to Frazer's house, and finally, after considerable trouble, succeeded in bringing Nellie here."

"Where is the girl?"

"Up-stairs."

"Things are booming in that direction. If we only get Foss out of the way, everything will be lovely."

"You may bet your bottom dollar on that. Let's have another drink."

The glasses were filled and drained. Then Clews related to Pete Cole all that Phil had found out, and finally wound up by saying:

"Phil says that Frazer and the detective took a large box and deposited it in the Safe Deposit Vault."

"What do you suppose it contains?"

"I have an idea that it contains that dead woman's securities."

"If that is the case, we must get hold of them. I never knew that Frazer was a lawyer."

"I think he was. But how can we get hold of the securities?"

"We'll talk about that to-night. The women are shrewd, and perhaps may be able to help us out."

"What are you going to do with Nellie Frazer?"

"Marry her, and then compel the old man to come to terms. If he don't why then his goose will be cooked."

"Well, let's say no more about this until later on. Let's have a game of cards."

The cards were taken from a drawer, and then the two scoundrels commenced to play. The time passed quickly, and when nine o'clock came, Cole and Clews woke up the old hag, and, after ordering her to keep a sharp lookout, they left the hut and went direct to the Varieties, where they met Andy Suggs and the two women spoken of.

The confidence-man was chatting pleasantly with Rebecca Suggs, a woman of medium height, with dark-brown hair, and eyes that sparkled like coals of fire. She was his sister, and was the wife of Lewis Clews. Among her associates she went by no other name except Becky Suggs. At first sight an observer would be attracted by her face, but, after a close study of her features one would find deep lines, which showed that she was innured to vice, and would dare to do anything.

The other woman differed from Becky both in features and character. Although her companions were criminals, and she had committed a number of crimes herself, still she had a nature that, if she had been thrown in with nobler and better people, she would have been much better than she was now. She went by the name of Louise Porter, and lived with Suggs as his wife.

She had just come in a few minutes before Cole and Clews. This was the mysterious woman who had placed the note in the detective's hand, and who afterwards led him to the house on the water-front.

If Suggs had known of her action in this matter, he would have killed her then and there in the private room at the Varieties. But as it was, he knew nothing about it, and Louise Porter was safe.

Suggs had sent out a spy to watch the detective's movements, and this fellow arrived a short time after Clews and Cole came in. Then it was that the fight occurred and the saloon took fire. The building being a frame structure, it soon burned to the ground, and the Varieties was a thing of the past.

The inmates took refuge in the adjacent saloons. It was as much as the firemen could do to save the buildings surrounding the Varieties, but by dint of hard work they succeeded in getting the fire under control.

Louise Porter did not keep her eyes off of the detective. She had made up her mind to protect him at all hazards, and when she saw him on the opposite side of the street, she slipped away from the companions and then led Foss towards the tenement.

After this the party broke up, with the understanding that they would all meet the next morning at the hut, when they would form their plans in regard to what they would do next.

Cole returned to the hut, Suggs and Becky went to a gambling-house, while Clews, who said that he had some private business on hand, walked briskly towards the water-front, and entered the sailors' drinking saloon, where he had an appointment with some one.

Just as Clews was about to enter the saloon he saw the

detective and Louise Porter enter the hall. He recognized Foss, but failed to recognize the woman.

The scoundrel went into the saloon, looked around, and failing to find the man he had come to see, he concluded that he would follow the detective and see what he was up to.

At a short distance he tracked Foss and the woman through the yard and alley. On reaching the warehouse he found his path barred by the locked gate, and he was compelled to scale the two fences. This delayed him, and Louise Porter and the detective were up at the top of the house before Clews entered the lower hall.

When Clews came into the hall he heard the door of the woman's room being closed, and from the sound he immediately came to the conclusion that the detective was at the top of the house.

He lost no time in ascending the stairs, and was overjoyed when he found that Foss was in the room. He listened at the door, but could not make out what was being said, and he was furious with rage.

Just as he was about to put his ear to the key-hole, his shoes, which were quite heavy, commenced to squeak, and he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat without having gained anything. On his way down-stairs Clews determined that he would wait in the lower hall until Foss came down, when he would spring on the detective unawares, and, if possible, kill him.

Too well did the scoundrel carry out his plans. After the struggle Clews was overjoyed, and hastened to find his associates to tell them that he had killed the detective. He had not left the house long, and disappeared from the corner, before Louise Porter came down-stairs, and, without stumbling over the prostrate form, she hurried through the lower hall, and made her way to the hut shortly after Clews arrived. All of her companions were assembled in the conference-room, including the dwarf and Mother Carey. All were jubilant over the announcement that the detective was dead, and Lewis Clews was looked upon as a benefactor and was toasted over and over again.

"Now we are free," exclaimed Cole, "and we can carry out our plans without fear of being molested. Death to all detectives."

"So say we all," broke out Suggs, who, together with the rest of the gang, was now gloriously drunk.

About daybreak the debauch broke up, and those who had not gone to sleep in a heap in a corner, managed to meander to their rooms. The dwarf Phil was in a state of unconsciousness, and Mother Carey was no better, being asleep in the rocking-chair, and threatening every moment to be thrown to the floor.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SAFE DEPOSIT VAULT ROBBED.

HUGH FOSS remained in an insensible condition for over an hour, and it looked very much as if the base scoundrel's plan had been successful, and he had really murdered the detective. But the brave man's enemies were doomed to be disappointed. Slowly Foss commnced to revive, and at last he was able to sit up. Strange noises went humming through his head, and it was some time before he could remember what had happened. But as consciousness gradually began to return, the detective remembered everything, and at last was able to rise to his feet. As he tried to stand up, he found that something held him back, and that his coat was pinned to the floor.

He put his hand to his side and felt the handle of the knife. In a moment Foss pulled the knife from the boards, and he saw from what he had escaped. The knife, instead of being buried in the detective's body, had passed between his arm and his side, and was imbedded in the floor. Clews was in too great a hurry to stop and examine the body of his victim, and it was thus that the detective had escaped. If the scoundrel had struck a light he would have seen the miss he had made, and then the probabilities are that Foss would not have escaped and lived to hunt the rascals down.

The detective, as soon as he had regained his senses, staggered out of the hall into the street. He was so weak that he reeled from side to side like a drunken man. He succeeded in reaching the corner, and caught hold of the lamp-post to support himself while a car came along. He succeeded in reaching his home without any further mishap. He had taken a drink of liquor before going into the house, and this helped greatly to strengthen him.

When Foss entered his room he found everything in confusion and the gas burning at full height. In an instant he divined what had occurred in his absence. Some one had broken into the room with the intention of robbing him. The mattress on the bed was turned upside-down and the pillows and bed-clothing were thrown in a confused mass in the center. The detective's desk had been broken open and its contents, together with the contents of the bureau, were thrown over the floor.

The safe had been tampered with in the same way. In the safe the detective happened to have very little money or anything of any great value. From the examination which Foss commenced immediately after he entered the room, he saw that the money and the papers in the safe and desk had not been taken away. Whoever had broken into the room were not after money. What, then, could they have been after? The thought came to the detective's mind in an instant. The parties who had broken into his room were not after money, but after the scraps of paper!

"They were fooled that time," Foss exclaimed. Then he stepped to the fire-place, and seeing that the scraps and other things were safe, he replaced the box and commenced to straighten up his room. This was finished by the time it was daylight, and then the detective sat down at his desk to think of what he should do next. As Foss thought over the events of the day and all that had occurred from the time that Mrs. Howland and her child were murdered, he came to the conclusion that his enemies now thought that he was dead. He determined to strengthen them in this belief, and to do this he would be compelled not to be seen at his room, or any place about the house.

As Foss' sister kept the house in which he lived, to do this was an easy matter. At five o'clock the detective went to his sister's room, and told her all that had occurred and what he intended to do. She was ready to help him in every way, and it was finally agreed that he was to leave the house, and that she was to put up a bill to rent the room. This done, she was to go to police headquarters and report that he was missing. After this, when any one called to ask for him, she was to state that she supposed that he was dead.

These arrangements made, the detective bade his sister good-by and returned to his room, where he donned the disguise of an Irish mechanic, and after he had packed some clothing in a valise, he left the house, not to return again until he had succeeded in capturing the murderers.

He went direct to a mechanic's boarding-house and hired

a room. He then went to bed, and did not awake again until early the next morning, when he got up, washed himself, had his breakfast, bought that day's papers and returns to his room to read them. The first thing that met Foss' eye was the account of his disappearance, and the efforts the police were making to find his body. This brought a broad grin to his face when he saw how the reporters had made him out a hero. Other detectives had been assigned to the Howland case, but none of them succeeded in finding any clue, and to the public as well as the police the whole affair was shrouded in mystery.

As the detective turned the pages of the paper he was reading, on the fourth page he found something which attracted his attention, and he read the article with a great deal of care. When he finished reading his face wore a puzzled expression, and as he laid down the paper he murmured:

"This is some of Cole's work, I bet. Nellie Frazer has disappeared, and her father is almost frantic. The lawyer's office was broken into last night, but the scoundrels failed to get anything, as all the valuables are in the safe deposit vault."

After this the detective relapsed into a deep study, and at last, after he had finished thinking, he arose from his chair, changed his disguise to that of a peddler, and throwing a pack over his back, and carrying a basket on his arm, in which there were all kinds of notions, he left the boarding-house with the intention of visiting Barbary Coast, hoping by doing so that he would be able to find some clue which would help him to discover the whereabouts of the conspirators. Foss walked slowly along Kearney street, stopping every little while to cry out his wares, and to scan the faces of the passers-by. At last he reached the Coast, which had an entirely different appearance in the day-time to what it did at night. The streets looked as if they were deserted.

In and out of the saloons the peddler went, crying his wares, selling very little, except a few collar-buttons, until he reached a place known as Bottle Konigs. This was a saloon where nothing but beer was sold, and in which a large orchestrion played incessantly night and day. There were two of these instruments, and each played alternately, so that the patrons of the Beer King were never without music. The saloon was the largest of the kind on the Pacific coast, was situated in the worst district of the city, and was frequented by all classes. It was noon-time when the detective entered the place, and he found that all the tables were occupied. The place had at least a hundred tables, and at each table were four chairs. The walls were hung with fancy pictures, and were covered with the flags of all nations. The saloon was divided into three parts. The basement was used as a billiard and ten-pin hall, the street-floor was the saloon, while the second story was laid off into small rooms, which were used for gambling purposes and private conversation. The detective went from table to table, crying:

"Kollar-puttons—eight for five cents. Who vants? Kollar-puttons—kollar-puttons!"

"Here, fellow, give me a card!" at this the detective turned around, and to his joy found that the man who had hailed him was Suggs. He sold the confidence-man a card of bone buttons and then went on through the saloon crying his wares.

(To be continued.)

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CURRENT NEWS

DREAM WARNS OF DEATH

There are many stories on record of the warning dream. The late Lord Dufferin, when in Paris, dreamed that he was in a hearse being conveyed to the cemetery.

A few days later, as he was about to enter a hotel lift, he was startled to observe that the attendant was the living reproduction of the driver of the hearse in his dream. He stepped back and the lift went up without him.

Before it had reached the top of the building some breakage took place in the mechanism, and the lift crashed down to the bottom, everyone in it being killed.

NEW YORK'S HOUSING PROBLEM

While the United States Department of Labor has estimated that there exists in the country a shortage of 500,000 houses as a result of the stoppage of building by war conditions, it is probable that half a million does not cover the actual deficiency. Reports from New York city show that living quarters there are now at a high premium. Rents have gone up approximately one-third, moderate-priced apartments being subject to the largest increase. Thousands of war workers have been crowded into the city and the regular growth has been advanced in many other ways. A survey of 152 cities shows an encouraging increase of building, although it has not yet reached one-third of the normal volume of construction.

SPIDERS AS AGUE CURE

In Ireland spiders are largely concerned in the cure of ague; in many localities the sufferer is advised to swallow a living spider.

This ought to make one shake nearly as bad as the ague, and no doubt the better way would be to put a large black spider in a box and leave it to perish, as is the vogue in Somerset and some of the nearby counties.

A lingering faith in this Old World superstition must have been alive until quite recently, for the making of spider web pills is not an uncommon industry in New England, and Longfellow tells of a popular cure for the fever "by wearing a spider hung around one's neck in a nutshell."

PIGS GOT DRUNK

While Jerry Lolic was working in the shipyards his pigs got out on the Powell Valley road, took advantage of his absence and went on a rip-roaring drunk, according to the statement of witnesses in court.

A warrant was out for Lolic's arrest on a charge of illicit manufacture of wine. It was placed in the hands of a deputy sheriff for service. He went the Lolic's place, but the man was at work in town. He found a vat of wine and rather than transport it to town poured it into a trough that led to the pigpen. The pigs sucked it up in a manner almost human, as the story goes.

Presently they lay down in their wallow, blind, stupid and hopelessly drunk. Mrs. Lolic viewed their silent forms with alarm and telephoned to Lolic that the pigs were all dead. They were only dead drunk. Lolic was fined $50 for having the wine in his possessi-

MADE DEAD LEGALLY

Daniel Dunbar, who went to Oregon forty-nine years ago, is to be declared legally dead in order that an estate of $330 can be settled.

Dunbar, when he left Newcastle, Ind., gave Daniel Bowman, sr., now dead, a number of notes to be collected. He instructed Mr. Bowman to hold the money until he returned or sent for it. Dunbar did neither, and the money is held by Abraham Bowman, a son of Daniel Bowman. Abraham Bowman now is seventy-seven years old and desires to be relieved of the money.

The sum originally was said to be large, but when the Hagerstown Bank failed about fifteen years ago, only $300 was saved. Action was taken in the Circuit Court recently to declare Dunbar legally dead and settle the estate.

Dunbar was an orphan. He wrote several letters, but the last one was received more than thirty years ago.

PUT HIS HOUSE ON A WAGON TO GET TO WORK

Moving, rent-finding and the high cost of rentals have no terrors for James Liller, his wife and son Edward, who last spring set their house on a wagon and hauled it to Bath, Me., and this spring repeated the journey of 78 miles, the whole of the family enjoying uninterrupted housekeeping.

Residents along the Maine highways have noted the curious spectacle of this moving domicile, the man seated comfortably on the frozen piazza driving the horses, the boy and a shepherd dog running alongside the wheels, the smoke curling from the kitchen stove and Mrs. Liller's face occasionally at the window to catch the scenery and other points of interest.

Liller, who belongs in North Berwick, Me., has been cutting wood at Bath the last winter, and, in view of the scarcity of dwellings and rents—with the shipbuilding program on for Uncle Sam—he was glad that he had taken his Lares and Penates with him. The journey in each trip was made in three days.

SHOPLIFTER USES WIG FOR STOLEN ARTICLES

The prosecuting counsel in a shoplifting case in Paris told an extraordinary story of the proceedings of the light-fingered family. The mother wore a large and ingeniously constructed wig. It was made so that she could conceal in it an infinite number of stolen articles. These she obtained through her sons, who were exceedingly skillful in pilfering from shop showcases.

The three were watched in a well-known store, and it was seen that the two boys took a large number of small objects. The part that the woman played was not very apparent, but the police felt justified in arresting her. When she was searched, however, nothing incriminating could be found until one of the wardresses noticed the care with which the woman moved her head. Immediately she insisted on investigating her hair.

Among other things she discovered a roll of costly lace, a lady's gold watch and chain, and two heavy gold bracelets. The prosecution also stated that the two younger prisoners were expert pickpockets.

SURGEONS WORKED WONDERS DURING WAR

Notwithstanding the devilish ingenuity shown by the Germans in adding new horrors to war and the prevalence of infected wounds, the proportion of killed to wounded has been materially lowered by medical science, says the Journal of American Medical Association. In earlier days, we are told by Woods Hutchinson in his popular presentation of the work of "The Doctor in War," five were killed in battle to from ten to twelve who died of wounds. In our Civil War 67,000 were killed and 43,000 died of wounds. In the Russo-Japanese War 47,000 were killed outright and only 11,000 died of wounds. In the British army during the first three years of the war 90 per cent of the wounded who lived to reach the ambulance recovered, 95 per cent of those who reached casualty clearing stations recovered, and of those who reached base hospitals in England 98 per cent regained their health.

MINE PRODUCES COAL AND SAND

A mining plant that is decidedly unique is located in Ohio. Both coal and sand are taken from the one property, which consists of 150 acres. The surface strata is high grade molding sand and has an average depth of about nine feet. It is deposited on a bed of shale about five feet in thickness and under this is a seam of excellent coal averaging from four to five feet. Shipments of sand already have been made to foundries throughout the country. A considerable tonnage of coal also has been mined. As the shale strata is uncovered by the removal of the sand, steam shovels will be utilized to strip the shale, thereby exposing the seam of coal which will be mined in the open. In comparatively few localities is the coal seam sufficiently near the surface to permit of stripping. The sand is mined by steam shovel and is conveyed by mine cars to a stockhouse from which it is loaded into cars by a belt conveyor. A force of nine men can load 400 tons of sand a day.

HORSES SLEEP STANDING UP

Horses seldom lie down to sleep. Throughout their entire lives most of them sleep while standing on their feet. The reason for this is believed to be that the horses are afraid that an insect might crawl into their nostrils. This is a very likely explanation, when we consider that a horse's nostrils are the most sensitive part of its body, says Popular Science Monthly. If the insect could not be removed it could easily irritate a horse to death. Many horses will not lie down because they have once been "foundered," that is, unable to get up unassisted.

Another curious fact about a sleeping horse is that it seems always to keep its faculties working. Its ears, for instance, keep constantly twitching and the animal seems to hear the slightest noise. Because of this it would probably be impossible for a man to enter a stable quietly enough to prevent his waking up every horse in it. Horses act peculiarly also in time of fire. They will burn to death rather than rush out from the stalls.

FISH CAN REASON

It has been proved by a French naturalist, as the result of a series of interesting experiments, that fish can actually reason, though very slowly.

M. Oxner baited a hook, and fastened a tiny piece of white paper about two inches above it. With this bait he tempted a recently captured fish. The fish, however, was wily, and for seven days refused the bait. Then, when the week-old memory of his capture had apparently vanished from its mind, the fish bit and was hooked.

M. Oxner carefully unhooked the catch and replaced it in the water, also readjusting the bait with the warning paper. Three times more the fish bit, with a day's interval between each bite. After that it no longer touched the bait, for the meaning of the paper signal had become known to it.

On the twelfth day the piece of paper was removed from the hook and the fish bit the bait. The paper was replaced, and for three days the fish refused to tackle the lure, contenting himself with watching it from a safe distance.

On the fourth day, however, the fish swam right up to the paper signal, sniffed it, and then descended, and very cautiously nibbled the bait until it had succeeded in eating it all off the hook without swallowing the latter.

On the bait being replaced, the fish did exactly the same thing, and so carefully avoided capture. Experiments with other fish had similar results.

KING'S COFFIN PLATE USED AS FRYING PAN

At the Cluny Museum in Paris is a very interesting relic. One day, a few years ago, the curator of the museum happened to visit a small restaurant in the suburb of St. Denis, in which the same room served for dining-room and kitchen. While he was waiting to be served the curator was attracted by a frying-pan of unusual appearance that hung upon the wall.

He took it down, carefully removed some of the soot with which it was covered, and made out part of an inscription. What he found interested him so much that he bought the old pan.

When it was cleaned it was found to bear the arms of France and Navarre, surrounded by the chain of St. Louis and the cord of the Order of St. Esprit, and this inscription as well:

"Here lies the magnificent Prince, King Louis XIV., King of France and Navaarre. Requiescat in pace."

It was the plate that had been fastened to the coffin of Louis XIV. When the burial vaults of the royal family in the cathedral at St. Dennis were rifled by the populace in 1793 it had been wrenched from the coffin, fitted with a handle, and turned into a frying-pan. The handle had been removed.

A LOST TRIBE OF INDIANS

When in 1494, on his second voyage, Columbus discovered the island of Jamaica, it was populated by the Arawak Indians, who, although at first hostile to him, became friendly on his giving them clothing and other articles hitherto unknown to them.

When later the Spaniards settled the island they forced the Indians not only to do agricultural work in their own island, but to labor in the gold mines of Hayti. So hard were the Spanish taskmasters that by 1558 the whole Arawak nation was exterminated.

During the past eight years efforts have been made, under the auspices of a scientific society, to recover all possible traces of the lost race. To that end explorations have been made in the old kitchen middens, or refuse heaps, of the Arawaks, in which there have been found, besides shells and pottery and fish, turtle and cony bones, many celts, or rude chisels, grinding stones, stone pendants and axes—1,500 objects in all, which have been given to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

To the anthropologist the most interesting objects are the cylindrical stone pendants, which were fashioned with sand and stone and endless rubbing. Pendants of exactly the same sort are worn to-day as insigna of office by chiefs or headmen of tribes in northern South America.

THE CLIFF-DWELLERS

One of the most interesting historical wonders in this country is the ruins of the abodes of the cliff-dwellers in southern Colorado and Utah. When the Europeans were still barbarians these cliff-dwellers of the Southwest were a semi-civilized race. They had developed arts, had built churches, temples and council halls. One of their buildings in Arizona was large enough to seat 10,000 persons.

A great deal of mystery surrounds the cliff-dwellers. They flourished in a very ancient time; in fact, some of their caves are thought to date from the stone age. When the Spaniards came to the country they found the cliff-dwellings long since abandoned. The most plausible explanation of the disappearance of this race is that they were driven off by marauding bands.

The cliff houses were usually built near some stream of running water, which was kept replenished by the everlasting snows on the mountains. The people irrigated ground in the valleys and on the mountains—above the cloud line—raised corn.

Some of their buildings were great community houses with hundreds of rooms. One populous city was several miles in length, with one long street. The caves were burrowed in the mountain rock, which is of a kind that is easily chiseled. The rooms were usually about ten feet across and just high enough to permit one to stand upright. Each house had a large cave where the dwellers worshiped a sacred serpent and fire. It is supposed that the Pueblo Indians are descended from these ancient cave-dwellers.

$50,000,000,000

A few years ago an American couldn't utter the word "billion" without putting on a serious countenance, throwing out his chest, pressing his lips tightly together and exerting his breath until the tremendous syllables burst from him like an explosion.

Then Congress for the first time appropriated a billion dollars for governmental needs, and a shout of mingled pride and criticism went up from the country, the pride drowning the criticism when Speaker Tom Reed said: "Well, this is a billion-dollar country."

"Now anybody can talk of a billion dollars, though nobody can think it. O. P. Austin, chief statistician of the National City Bank, recently asked a United States Treasury official how long it would take an expert counter, working eight hours every day, Sunday included, to count a billion silver dollars. After due calculation the official answered: "A little more than 102 years." And those Treasury counters go more than twice as fast as the ordinary layman could, at that.

If $50,000,000,000 were equally divided among all the men, women and children now on earth, each would have almost $36.

The total value of all the real estate and all the personal property in the five boroughs of New York, the wealthiest city in the world, equals less than one-fifth of $50,000,000,000.

We all thought our Government was going it pretty strong when it asked us to subscribe $14,000,000,000 in the four Liberty Loan campaigns. But this enormous sum is only 28 per cent of the $50,000,000,000 Germany must pay for her ambition to rule the world.

If all the gold and all the silver mined in all the world since the discovery of America were to-day in Germany's hands, she would have to almost double it to have enough to pay the $50,000,000,000 demanded of her.

In the four years of the war the countries engaged in it issued $36,000,000,000 of paper money, an inflation unprecedented in history, bringing the total of the world's legal tender circulating medium up to $45,000,000,000. So, if Germany had all the paper money that to-day exists in the world she would have to add $5,000,000,000 to it to make up her $50,000,000,000.

The national debts of all the countries of the world in 1913 totalled $40,000,000,000, only four-fifths of what Germany must hand over in indemnities to other countries.

When we consider the total of imports, free and dutiable, into this country in its biggest year, 1918, were less than $3,000,000,000 in value and that our exports in our greatest year, 1917, were less than $6,000,000,000, we get some faint glimmering of how much money $50,000,000,000 is.

SKINS OF AQUATIC ANIMALS USED FOR LEATHER MAKING

Leather of all types and adaptable for the varied services for which the tanned skins of domesticated animals are utilized is now being made from the skins of various aquatic animals, including ray, shark, sturgeon, paddle fish, whale and porpoise. Development of this new branch of the leather industry has reached the stage where the raw material has been converted into men's, women's and children's shoes and belts, wallets, portfolios, brief cases, etc.

According to Alfred Ehrenreich, president of the Ocean Leather Company, of New York, who for some time past has been working on processes for the efficient tanning of fish skins, the production of this new form of leather is only in its infancy and holds strong possibilities of a rapid and large growth. Reclaiming plants are operated by this company at Morehead City, N. C.; Cape Lookout, N. C.; Fort Myers, Fla., and Sanibal Island, Fla., where with comparatively limited facilities an average of 200 large fish is caught daily. Nets, hooks and pound or wire trap nets are used in gathering fish, including mammals.

At the reduction plants the fish are stripped of their skins, which are shipped to the company's tannery in Newark, N. J., where the finished leather is produced. Mr. Ehrenreich declares that at present the tannery is treating about 500 hides a week, but that next year it is likely that the weekly output will range from 2,000 to 6,000 hides.

Sole leather that is said to be indestructible is made from chagreen, or the outer grain of nurse sharks caught in the Gulf of Mexico or in south Atlantic waters. This grain contains a hard substance which is also used for the making of emery wheels. Experiments are now being made to adapt this material for service in diamond cutting instruments. Gullets of seal are made into covers for medicine and perfume bottles and also can be used for the same purposes as chamois skin.

Nothing goes to waste at the reduction plants or the tannery. The stomachs of sharks are converted into shoe and fancy leather, while the intestines of the porpoise make an excellent thin leather suitable for manufacturing infants' and children's shoes. All species of sharks, rays and devil fish ("manta") can be made into shoe, bag or fancy leather.

"All species of the whale family which we catch, such as killer whales, blackfish and porpoise—all mammals," said Mr. Ehrenreich, "can be made into shoe, bag or fancy leather. Splits also can be made into leather for shoes. By-products of our reduction plants include food, fertilizer, chicken and cattle feed, oil, glue, strings for musical instruments and skins for sausages. Shark fins are sold to Chinese as delicatessen, and we find a service for the blood of this animal as a tanning material. Sharks, rays and devil fish have oil in their livers which has a commercial value, and all species of whales have oil in the blubber, head and jaw.

AN IMMENCE CAVE FOUND AND EXPLORED

An immense cave, the largest in Madison County, Arkansas, and apparently one of the largest in the State, has been discovered on a farm belonging to former State Senator Lemuel Kendall, situated four miles northeast of Alabama. The entrance, obscure and scarcely noticeable, is near King's River.

The cave has been explored a distance of five miles, and many other passages opened beyond in an intricate and apparently endless procession. Scores of rooms, some small, but one more than a quarter of an acre in extent, were exployed. There are many stalagmites and stalactites in every room. Both are united in several places, forming wonderful white columns that stand sentinel-like near the remains of strange animals and heaps of human bones.

For, while nothing was known of this cave until a short time ago, it was evidently well known in the past, and seems to have been used as a burial spot in primitive times. The sloping skull of a man of a vanished race has been found.

A swift subterranean river flows in this cave, and it is large enough for big boats to float on its surface. Blind fish are found in its waters. Yawning chasms of unknown depths render travel in some portions of the cave exceedingly dangerous, and one of the explorers who lost his footing was rescued with difficulty. Many beautiful basins worn out of solid rock are found, and these contain crystal-clear pools.

Although remote from the railroad, it is believed that many students of geology will visit this remarkable cavern and read its wonderful history.

WEB OF MADAGASCAR SPIDER.

"It is interesting to know the practical uses to which the webs of a large Madagascar spider might be applied to replace silk for woven fabrics," said Fisher S. Williams, of London, who is interested in the manufacture of silk.

"I know from visits to the interior of Madagascar that the webs spun many feet across the walks or shady avenues of gardens are sufficiently strong to hang thereon a light bamboo walking cane. At the Paris exposition of 1900 a whole piece of fabric eighteen yards long and eighteen inches wide was woven out of this web, for which it was necessary to provide 100,000 yards of spun thread of twenty-four strands.

"For its manufacture 25,000 spiders had to be brought into requisition, and these were procured by offering the natives so much a hundred; but not knowing—or ignoring—the purposes for which the insects were required and having a get-rich-quick desire, they brought them in by basketing, mostly dead. It was found necessary for the winding off machines to go to the spiders instead of calling in the spiders to the filatories. However, the piece of cloth was completed and was of a shimmering golden yellow color.

"The idea of obtaining silk from the spider is an old one, as distinguished men in France discoursed on the subject as long ago as 1710, but the first study of this Madagascar spider came up some ten years ago, and the spinning of its web was then undertaken. It is only the female that spins. The first difficulty in obtaining the thread direct from the insect consisted in contriving how to secure the living spider so as to wind it off by some mechanical process from the insect. This was originally performed by confining spiders in empty match boxes, with the abdomen protruding. The extraction of the web does not apparently inconvenience the insect, although care has to be taken not to injure them."

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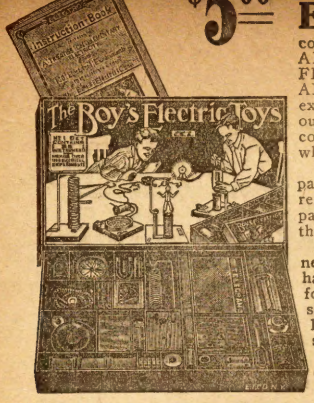

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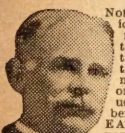

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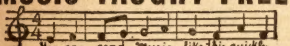

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